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SERMONS,

BY THE LATE

REV. EDWARD PAYSON, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE

SECOND CHURCH IN PORTLAND.

PORTLAND:

SHIRLEY AND HYDE, 7, EXCHANGE-STREET.

SOLD BY PEIRCE AND WILLIAMS, BOSTON: JOHN P. HAVEN, NEW YORK: AND E. LITTELL, PHILADELPHIA.

1828.

DISTRICT OF MAINE, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the first day of August, A. D. 1828, in the United States of America, Ann Louisa Payson, of the said District, has deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof she claims as proprietor, in the words following, *to wit:*

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THE history of this volume is quickly told. On the death of its lamented author, an extensive and urgent desire was expressed for the publication of some of those pulpit addresses, the delivery of which had been so greatly blessed. This desire, though perfectly natural and reasonable, would have been unavailing, but for the confident belief, that the publication would subserve the cause of religion. The thought, that his labors should be lost to the rest of the world, was so irreconcilable with the feelings of some of Dr. Payson's most judicious hearers, that, long before his last sickness, they solicited him to prepare a selection of his Sermons for the press; but his strong and uniform aversion to printing his own productions, prevented his compliance, till a few days before his decease. He then, from his general recollection of their contents, directed a number to be separated from the mass, out of which he was willing a selection should be made, and to which it must be confined. It is not known, that his restriction has been violated; though, from causes which need not be mentioned, it became impossible to identify *every one*, thus separated, with absolute certainty.

Should any glance at the volume, and inquire, Are these the Sermons, which procured for their author such astonishing popularity, and wrought with such power upon his numerous audience?—it must be conceded, that many things accompanied their delivery, and contributed to their effect, which do not appear in print. There was an unaffected earnestness, a glowing intensity of feeling, a peculiarity of expression and utterance, a manner wholly original and indescribable, which will not attend their perusal, except in the minds of those, who were accustomed to hear him. The reader will not feel the immediate influence of those prayers, which disarmed criticism, which awed the most thoughtless, which brought them directly before Infinite Majesty, and made them feel that they had business of greater importance, than to criticise or cavil.

It should also be stated, that, in several instances, the manuscripts ended in the midst of a sentence, or near the commencement of a paragraph;—leaving the editor this only alternative, either to pause, before coming to the defective portion, or else to supply the defect himself,—the latter he has rarely had the presumption to attempt. These absent portions, as supplied by the preacher, were probably the most impressive parts of these discourses.

It was Dr. Payson's practice to preach, at least, half the time without writing.

His unwritten Sermons were as regularly planned, and as faithfully studied, as those which he penned; and his quick perception, ready memory, power of illustration, and the fervor excited by the very exercise of addressing an assembly of immortals, to whom his message was to be a savor of eternal life, or death,—gave an impressiveness to his unwritten discourses, perhaps, even beyond what attended his written Sermons. His great reason for writing at all, was, the exhausting effect, upon his physical powers, of preaching constantly without notes. It appears to have been no part of Dr. Payson's concern, to write a *great* Sermon; but the question, which seems to have been uppermost in his mind, was, how shall I present this subject so as to accomplish the most good? And in answering this question he consulted the capacity of ordinary hearers. Hence the great simplicity of his language, even in his boldest flights; hence the plainness and directness of his address, and a greater diffuseness of style, than he would otherwise have adopted.

In judging of these Sermons as intellectual efforts, it should also be remembered, that, besides the ceaseless calls for pastoral labor by a very numerous flock, and other demands upon his time, the preparing and preaching of three such Sermons a week, was the regular employment of Dr. Payson, during the greater part of his ministry. He seldom failed to meet his pastoral charge on the Sabbath, and at the weekly lecture; and the powers of his mind appear, not so much in single discourses, as in the general excellence of all, and that almost "infinite variety," which they exhibit, in the manner of presenting and enforcing truth and duty. He never 'nods.' While there is an obvious difference between his early and late productions, which shows a rapid progress of mind; there is a surprising equality in those which belong to the same period of his ministry, and this circumstance has increased the difficulty of making the selection.

The preceding suggestions have not arisen from the slightest conviction, that the following Sermons need any apology. On the contrary, it is believed, they will fill a place unoccupied in this species of literature, and be found a valuable accession to its riches.

It was originally contemplated, that the volume should include those Sermons of Dr. Payson, which have already been published. But on further examination of the manuscripts, it was thought, that subscribers and the public would be more obliged and profited by originals, possessing equal excellence; especially, as many are necessarily suppressed, which are not less deserving of the public eye. As an act of justice to the author, however, one is inserted, which has already appeared, that the reader, by a comparison of the others with this, might have an opportunity to judge what would have been their appearance, had they been revised by the Doctor's own hand.—For the arrangement of the Sermons, their titles, and some minor things, the editor is responsible.

The volume, it is believed, will fulfil every promise held out in the proposals; and contains a miniature likeness of its author, in addition. It is commended to that Spirit, who has already set his seal to its truths.

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SERMON I.

THE BIBLE ABOVE ALL PRICE.

PREACHED BEFORE THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF MAINE, MAY 5, 1814.

THERE are two objects, which a speaker who addresses his fellow-beings on an occasion like the present, ought ever to keep in view. Of these objects, the first, and, with respect to his hearers, the most important, is, to induce them to prize as it deserves, a volume, which, notwithstanding its unrivalled claims to attention, is too generally neglected. The second is, to procure their assistance, in gratuitously distributing this volume among their destitute fellow-creatures. These objects, though distinct, are intimately connected; for if we can be induced suitably to prize the Sacred Scriptures ourselves, there will be little difficulty in persuading us to aid, in communicating them to others; and there is but too much reason for presuming, that he, who is not desirous to impart this treasure to all around him, knows nothing of its real value, nor of the temper which it is designed to produce.

With respect to a part, and we trust a very considerable part of the present assembly, the objects, which we have mentioned, may be considered as already attained. There are, we doubt not, many before us, who entertain a profound veneration for the Bible; and in whose breasts it has an advocate, who pleads its cause, and that of the destitute, far more powerfully and successfully than we can do. To such persons, nothing need be said in favor of a book, which not only affords them support and consolation under the troubles of life, but enables them to contemplate death with pleasure, and, to borrow its own language, makes them "wise unto salvation." If all present are of this description, our object is obtained; and farther remarks are needless. But it is presumable, that in every assembly, many are to be found, who, through inattention to the subject, or from some other cause, have formed very inadequate conceptions of the worth of this volume; and who, consequently, do not feel the infinite importance of putting it into the hands of others. It is also notorious, that even among such as profess to venerate the scriptures, there are not a few, who seem to regard them as deficient in those qualities, which excite interest and attention. It may not be improper, therefore, on an occasion like the present, to make a few remarks with a design to shew, that while the scriptures are incalculably valuable and important, viewed as a revelation from heaven; they are also in a very high degree interesting and deserv-

ing of attention, considered merely as a human composition. As the whole volume of scripture will form the subject of these remarks, it was thought unnecessary to select any particular part of it as a text.

Were we permitted to adduce the testimony of the scriptures in their own favor, as a proof that their contents are highly interesting, our task would be short, and easily accomplished. But it is possible, that to this testimony some might think it a sufficient reply, to apostrophize the sacred volume in the language of the captious Jews to our Saviour;—"Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true." No similar objection can be urged, however, against our availing ourselves of the testimony, which eminent uninspired men have borne in favor of the scriptures. From the almost innumerable testimonies of this nature, which might easily be adduced, we shall select only that of Sir William Jones, a Judge of the supreme court of judicature in Bengal—a man, says his learned biographer, who, by the exertion of rare intellectual talents, acquired a knowledge of arts, sciences, and languages, which has seldom been equalled, and scarcely, if ever, surpassed. "I have carefully and regularly perused the scriptures," says this truly great man, "and am of opinion, that this volume, independent of its divine origin, contains more sublimity, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains of eloquence, than can be collected from all other books, in whatever language they

may have been written." How well he was qualified to make this remark, and how much it implied in his lips, may be inferred from the fact, that he was acquainted with twenty-eight different languages, and with the best works, which had been published in most of them. That a volume, which, in the opinion of such a man, is thus superior to all other books united, cannot be so insipid and uninteresting a composition, as many seem to imagine, it must be needless to remark. That his praises, though great and unqualified, are in no respect unmerited, it would be easy, were it necessary, to prove, by appropriate quotations from the book which he so highly extols. But its morality will be more properly considered in a subsequent part of this discourse; and its unrivalled eloquence and sublimity are too obvious, and too generally acknowledged, to require illustration. If any imagine that he has estimated too highly, the historical information which this volume contains, we would only request them to peruse it with attention; and particularly to consider the assistance which it affords, in accounting for many otherwise inexplicable phenomena, in the natural, political, and moral world. A person who has never attended to the subject, will, on recollection, be surprised to find, for how large a proportion of his knowledge, he is indebted to this neglected book.* It is the only book which satisfactorily accounts, or even pro-

* It will be recollected, that we here refer to such information only, as uninspired men might communicate.

fesses to account, for the introduction of natural and moral evil into the world, and for the consequent present situation of mankind. To this book we are also indebted, for all our knowledge of the progenitors of our race, and of the early ages of the world;—for our acquaintance with the manners and customs of those ages;—for the origin and explanation of many remarkable traditions, which have extensively prevailed, and for almost every thing which is known, of many once flourishing nations; especially of the Jews, the most singular and interesting people, perhaps, that ever existed. It is the Bible alone, which, by informing us of the deluge, enables us to account, satisfactorily, for many surprising appearances in the internal structure of the earth, as well as for the existence of marine exuviæ on the summits of mountains, and in other places far distant from the sea. By the same volume we are assisted in accounting for the multiplicity of languages, which exist in the world; for the degraded condition of the Africans; for the origin and universal prevalence of sacrifices; and many other facts, of an equally interesting nature. We shall only add, that while the scriptures throw light on the facts here alluded to, the existence of these facts powerfully tends, on the other hand, to establish the truth and authenticity of the scriptures.

In addition to these intrinsic excellencies of the Bible, which give it, considered merely as a human production, powerful claims to the attention of persons of taste and learning, there are various circum-

stances, of an adventitious nature, which render it peculiarly interesting to a reflecting mind. Among these circumstances we may, perhaps, not improperly, mention its great antiquity. Whatever may be said of its inspiration, some of the books, which compose it, are unquestionably the most ancient literary compositions extant, and, perhaps, the most ancient that ever were written; nor is it very improbable, that letters were first employed in recording some parts of them, and that they were written in the language, first spoken by man. It is also not only the most ancient book, but the most ancient monument of human exertion, the eldest offspring of human intellect, now in existence. Unlike the other works of man, it inherits not his frailty. All the cotemporaries of its infancy have long since perished and are forgotten. Yet this wonderful volume still survives. Like the fabled pillars of Seth, which are said to have bid defiance to the deluge, it has stood, for ages, unmoved in the midst of that flood, which sweeps away men, with their labors, into oblivion. That these circumstances render it an interesting object of contemplation, it is needless to remark. Were there now in existence a tree which was planted; an edifice which was erected; or any monument of human ingenuity which was formed, at that early period, in which some parts of the Bible were written, would it not be contemplated with the keenest interest; carefully preserved as a precious relic; and considered as something, little less than sacred? With what

emotions then will a thoughtful mind often open the Bible; and what a train of interesting reflections, is it, in this view, calculated to excite? While we contemplate its antiquity, exceeding that of every object around us, except the works of God, and view it, in anticipation, as continuing to exist unaltered until the end of time, must we not feel almost irresistibly impelled to venerate it, as proceeding originally from him, who is yesterday, to-day, and forever the same; and whose works, like his years, fail not.

The interest, which this volume excites by its antiquity, will be greatly increased, if we consider the violent and persevering opposition it has encountered; and the almost innumerable enemies it has resisted and overcome. We contemplate, with no ordinary degree of interest, a rock, which has braved for centuries the ocean's rage, practically saying, "hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." With still greater interest, though of a somewhat different kind, should we contemplate a fortress, which, during thousands of years, had been constantly assaulted by successive generations of enemies;—around whose walls millions had perished;—and to overthrow which, the utmost efforts of human force and ingenuity had been exerted in vain. Such a rock, such a fortress, we contemplate in the Bible. For thousands of years, this volume has withstood, not only the iron tooth of time, which devours men, and their works together, but all the physical and

intellectual strength of man. Pretended friends have endeavored to corrupt and betray it; kings and princes have perseveringly sought to banish it from the world; the civil and military powers of the greatest empires have been leagued for its destruction; the fires of persecution have often been lighted to consume it, and its friends together; and, at many seasons, death, in some horrid form, has been the almost certain consequence of affording it an asylum from the fury of its enemies. It has also been almost incessantly assailed by weapons of a different kind, which, to any other book, would be far more dangerous than fire or sword. In these assaults, wit and ridicule have wasted all their shafts; misguided reason has been compelled, though reluctantly, to lend her aid, and, after repeated defeats, has again been dragged to the field; the arsenals of learning have been emptied to arm her for the contest; and, in search of means to prosecute it with success, recourse has been had, not only to remote ages, and distant lands, but even to the bowels of the earth, and the region of the stars. Yet still the object of all these attacks remains uninjured; while one army of its assailants after another has melted away. Though it has been ridiculed more bitterly, misrepresented more grossly, opposed more rancorously, and burnt more frequently, than any other book, and, perhaps, than all other books united; it is so far from sinking under the efforts of its enemies, that the probability of its surviving until the final consum-

mation of all things, is now, evidently, much greater than ever. The rain has descended; the floods have come; the storm has arisen, and beat upon it; but it falls not, for it is founded upon a rock. Like the burning bush, it has ever been in the flames, yet is still unconsumed; a sufficient proof, were there no other, that he who dwelt in the bush, preserves the Bible.

If the opposition which this volume has successfully encountered, renders it an interesting object of contemplation, the veneration which has been paid to it; the use which has been made of it, and the benefits which have been derived from it by the wise and good, in all ages, make it still more so. Who would not esteem it a most delightful privilege, to see and converse with a man, who had lived through as many centuries as the Bible has existed; who had conversed with all the successive generations of men, and been intimately acquainted with their motives, characters, and conduct; who had been the chosen friend and companion of the wise and good, in every age—the venerated monitor, to whose example and instructions, the wise had ascribed their wisdom, and the virtuous their virtues? What could be more interesting than the sight, what more pleasing and instructive than the society of such a man? Yet such society we may in effect enjoy, whenever we choose to open the Bible. In this volume, we see the chosen companion, the most intimate friend of the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, and their pious cotemporaries; the

guide, whose directions they implicitly followed; the monitor, to whose faithful warnings and instructions, they ascribed their wisdom, their virtues, and their happiness. In this volume, we see the book, in which the deliverer, the king, the sweet psalmist of Israel delighted to meditate, day and night; whose counsels made him wiser than all his teachers; and which he describes, as sweeter than honey, and more precious than gold. This too is the book, for the sake of which our pious ancestors forsook their native land and came to this then desolate wilderness; bringing it with them, as their most valuable treasure, and, at death, bequeathing it to us, as the richest bequest, in their power to make. From this source, they, and millions more now in heaven, derived the strongest and purest consolation; and scarcely can we fix our attention on a single passage in this wonderful book, which has not afforded comfort or instruction to thousands, and been wet with tears of penitential sorrow or grateful joy, drawn from eyes that will weep no more. There is, probably, not an individual present, some of whose ancestors did not while on earth, prize this volume more than life, and breathe many fervent prayers to heaven, that all their descendants, to the latest generation, might be induced to prize it in a similar manner. Thousands, too, have sealed their belief of its truth with their blood; rejoicing to shed it in defence of a book, which, while it led them to the stake, enabled them to triumph over its tortures. Nor have its effects

been confined to individuals. Nations have participated largely in its benefits. Armed with this volume, which is at once sword and shield, the first heralds of Christianity went forth conquering, and to conquer. No less powerful than the wonder working rod of Moses, its touch crumbled into dust the temples of paganism, and overthrew, as in a moment, the immense fabric of superstition and idolatry, which had been, for ages, erecting. To this volume alone it is owing, that we are not now assembled in the temple of an idol; that stocks and stones are not our deities; that cruelty, intemperance and impurity do not constitute our religion; and that our children are not burnt as sacrifices at the shrine of Moloch. To this volume we are also indebted for the reformation in the days of Luther; for the consequent revival and progress of learning; and for our present freedom from papal tyranny. Nor are these benefits, great as they are, all which it has been the means of conferring on man. Wherever it comes, blessings follow in its train. Like the stream, which diffuses itself, and is apparently lost among the herbage, it betrays its course by its effects. Wherever its influence is felt, temperance, industry, and contentment prevail; natural and moral evils are banished, or mitigated; and churches, hospitals, and asylums for almost every species of wretchedness, arise to adorn the landscape, and cheer the eye of benevolence. Such are the temporal benefits, which even infidelity itself, if it would for once be candid, must

acknowledge, that the Bible has bestowed on man. Almost coeval with the sun, its fittest emblem, it has, like that luminary, from the commencement of its existence, shed an unceasing flood of light on a benighted and wretched world. Who then can doubt, that he who formed the sun, gave the Bible to be "a light unto our feet, and a lamp to our path." Who, that contemplates this fountain, still full and overflowing, notwithstanding the millions who have drank of its waters, can doubt, that it has a real, though invisible connection with that river of life, which flows forever at the right hand of God?

Thus far we have considered the Bible as merely a human composition, though, as was unavoidable, some rays of divinity have, from time to time, burst through the cloud, in which we vainly attempted to shroud it. But if it be, in this view, thus valuable and interesting, in what language shall we describe the importance it assumes, when viewed as a revelation from GOD;—as the book which has guided millions of immortal beings to heaven;—as the book which must guide us there, if we ever reach those mansions of eternal day! That it is so, we shall not at present attempt to prove. In addressing such an assembly, on such an occasion, we have a right, to take it for granted;—to proceed on the supposition, that you believe with the apostle, that, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God." Viewed in this light, what finite mind can estimate its worth; or de-

scribe the reverence and attention, with which it ought to be regarded? The ancient Greeks had one sentence, which they believed, though without foundation, to have descended from heaven; and to evince their gratitude and veneration for this gift, they caused it to be engraven, in letters of gold, on the front of their most sacred and magnificent temple. We, more favored, have not a sentence only, but a volume, which really descended from heaven; and which, whether we consider its contents, or its Author, ought to be indelibly engraven on the heart of every child of Adam. Its Author is the author of our being; and its contents afford us information, of the most satisfactory and important kind, on subjects of infinite consequence; respecting which, all other books are either silent, or speak only doubtfully and unauthoritatively. It informs us, with the greatest clearness and precision, of every thing necessary either to our present, or future happiness;—of every thing, in fact, which its Author knows, the knowledge of which would be really useful to us; and thus confers those benefits, which the tempter falsely pretended would result from eating the forbidden fruit; making us as gods, knowing good and evil. In the fabulous records of pagan antiquity, we read of a mirror, endowed with properties so rare, that, by looking into it, its possessor could discover any object which he wished to see, however remote; and discern with equal ease, persons and things above, below, behind, and before

him. Such a mirror, but infinitely more valuable than this fictitious glass, do we really possess in the Bible. By employing this mirror in a proper manner, we may discern objects and events, past, present, and to come. Here we may contemplate the all-enfolding circle of the Eternal mind; and behold a most perfect portrait of Him, whom no mortal eye hath seen, drawn by his own unerring hand. Piercing into the deepest recesses of eternity, we may behold Him existing independent and alone, previous to the first exertion of His creating energy. We may see heaven, the habitation of His holiness and glory, "dark with the excessive brightness" of his presence; and hell, the prison of His justice, with no other light than that, which the fiery billows of his wrath cast, "pale and dreadful;" serving only to render "darkness visible." Here too, we may witness the birth of the world which we inhabit;—stand as it were, by its cradle; and see it grow up from infancy to manhood, under the forming hand of its Creator. We may see light at his summons starting into existence and discovering a world of waters, without a shore. Controlled by His word, the waters subside; and islands and continents appear, not, as now, clothed with verdure and fertility, but sterile, and naked as the sands of Arabia. Again he speaks; and a landscape appears, uniting the various beauties of spring, summer, and autumn; and extending farther than the eye can reach. Still all is silent; not even the hum of insects is heard,

and the stillness of death pervades creation; till, in an instant, songs burst from every grove; and the startled spectator, raising his eyes from the carpet at his feet, sees the air, the earth, and the sea filled with life and activity, in a thousand various forms. Here too, we may contemplate the origin and infancy of our race;—trace from its source to its termination that mighty river, of which we compose a part; and see it separating into two great branches; one of which flows back in a circle, and loses itself in the fountain, whence it arose; while the other rushes on impetuously in an opposite direction, and precipitates itself into a gulf, which has no bottom. In this glass, we may also discover the fountain, whence flow those torrents of vice and wretchedness which deluge the earth; trace the glorious plan of Divine providence running, like a stream of lightning, through the dark and stormy cloud of sublunary events; and see light and order breaking in upon the mighty chaos of crimes, revolutions, wars, and convulsions, which have ever distracted the world; and which, to a person unacquainted with the scriptures, must ever appear to produce no beneficial effect; but to succeed each other without order, and to happen without design. Here too, we may contemplate ourselves, in every conceivable situation and point of view;—see our hearts laid open, and all their secret recesses displayed;—trace as on a map, the paths which lead to heaven and to hell; ascertain in which we are walking; and learn, what we have been, what we

are, and what we shall be hereafter. Above all, we may here see displayed to view, that wonderful scheme for the redemption of self-destroyed man, into which, "angels desire to look;" and without which the knowledge of God, and of ourselves, would serve only to plunge us in the depths of despair. We may behold Him, whom we had previously seen creating the world, lying as a helpless infant in a manger; expiring in agonies on the cross; and imprisoned in the tomb. We may see Him, rising,—ascending to heaven,—sitting down "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high;" and there swaying the sceptre of universal empire, and ever living to make intercession for his people. Finally, we may see Him, coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to judge the world. We may see the dead, at His command, rising from their graves;—standing in awful silence and suspense before His tribunal;—and successively advancing, to receive from His lips, the sentence, which will confer on each of them an eternal weight of glory, or consign them forever to the mansions of despair. Such are the scenes and objects, which the scriptures place before us;—such the information which they afford. Who will deny that this information is important; or that it is such as we might naturally expect to find in a revelation from God?

Equally important to the present, and future happiness of man, are the precepts which the scriptures inculcate. With the greatest clearness

and precision; and with an authority, to which no other book can pretend, they teach us our duty to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves.—That spiritual kingdom, whose laws they promulgate, consists in "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" and were these laws universally obeyed, nothing but righteousness, peace, and holy joy, would be found on earth. Should any one deny this, after perusing them attentively, it would prove nothing, but the weakness of his understanding, or the depravity of his heart. They require us to regard God with filial, and our fellow-creatures with fraternal affection. They require rulers, to "be just; ruling in the fear of God;" and subjects, to "lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty." They require the husband to "love the wife even as himself;" and the wife "to reverence her husband." They require parents to educate their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and children to love, honor, and obey their parents. They require masters to treat their servants with kindness; and servants to be submissive, diligent, and faithful. They require of all, temperance, contentment, and industry; and stigmatize, as worse than an infidel, him, who neglects to provide for the necessities of his family. They provide for the speedy termination of animosities, and dissentions, by requiring us to forgive and pray for our enemies, whenever we pray for ourselves; and to make reparation to all, whom we may have injured,

before we presume to appear with our offerings in the presence of God. In a word, they teach us, that, "denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." These duties they require us to perform, with constancy and perseverance, on penalty of incurring the everlasting displeasure of our Creator, and its dreadful consequences.

In addition to these instructions and precepts, the scriptures furnish us with the most instructive examples—examples, which most plainly and convincingly teach us, both what we must shun, and what we are to pursue. On every rock, where immortal souls have been wrecked;—at the entrance of every path which leads to danger, they shew us some self-destroyed wretch, standing, like a pillar of salt, to warn succeeding travellers not to approach it; while at the gate, and in the path of life, they place many divinely instructed and infallible guides, who lead the way, beckon us to follow, and point to the happy mansions, in which it ends. Knowing how powerfully we are influenced by the example of those, with whom we associate, it introduces us to the society of the most amiable and excellent of our species; makes us perfectly acquainted with their characters and pursuits; admits us into, not only their closets, but their hearts; unveils to us all their secret springs of action; and shews us the hidden source whence they derived

wisdom and strength to subdue their sinful propensities, and overcome the world. By opening this volume, we may, at any time, walk in the garden of Eden with Adam; sit in the ark with Noah; share the hospitality, or witness the faith of Abraham; ascend the mount of God with Moses; unite in the secret devotions of David; or listen to the eloquent and impassioned addresses of St. Paul. Nay more, we may here converse with Him, who spoke as never man spake; participate with the spirits of the just made perfect, in the employments and happiness of heaven; and enjoy sweet communion with the Father of our spirits, through his Son, Jesus Christ. Such is the society, to which the scriptures introduce us;—such the examples, which they present to our imitation; requiring us, to follow them, "who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;" to walk in the steps of our divine Redeemer; and to be "followers of God, as dear children."

Nor does this precious volume contain nothing, but instructions, precepts, examples, and threatenings. No, it contains also, "strong consolation;"—consolation suited to every possible variety and complication of human wretchedness; and of sufficient efficacy to render the soul, not only resigned, but joyful, in the lowest depths of adversity;—not only tranquil, but triumphant in the very jaws of death. It is the appointed vehicle, by which the Spirit of God, the promised Comforter, communicates not only his instructions, but his conso-

lations to the soul. It is, if I may so express it, the body which he has assumed, in order to converse with men; and he lives and speaks in every line. Hence it is said to "be quick," or living, "and powerful." Hence its words "are spirit, and they are life;"—the living, life-giving words of the living God. The consolation which it imparts, and the blessings which it offers, are such, as nothing but omnipotent goodness can bestow. It finds us guilty; and freely offers us pardon. It finds us polluted with innumerable defilements; and offers us moral purity. It finds us weak and enslaved; and offers us liberty. It finds us wretched; and offers happiness. It finds us dead; and offers everlasting life. It finds us "having no hope and without God in the world," with nothing before us, "but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation;" and places glory, and honor, and immortality, full in our view; and while it urges us to pursue them, by the exercise of faith in the Redeemer, and "patient continuance in well doing," it encourages and animates us in the pursuit, by the most condescending offers of assistance, and "exceedingly great and precious promises;" promises signed by the immutable God, and sealed with the blood of his eternal Son;—promises which, one would think, are sufficient to render indolence active; and timidity bold. Unfailing pleasures; durable riches; immortal honors; imperishable mansions; an unfading crown; an immoveable throne; an ever-

lasting kingdom; an eternal weight of glory; perfect, uninterrupted, never-ending, perpetually increasing felicity, in the full fruition of God, are the rewards, which these promises assure to all penitent believers. But in vain do we attempt to describe these rewards; for, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Such are the circumstances, which render the Bible interesting as a human composition;—such the instructions, precepts, and promises, which it communicates as a revelation from God. And in proportion to the importance of its contents are the evils which would result from its absence or loss. Destroy this volume, as the enemies of human happiness have vainly endeavored to do; and you render us profoundly ignorant of our Creator; of the formation of the world which we inhabit; of the origin and progenitors of our race; of our present duty, and future destination; and consign us, through life, to the dominion of fancy, doubt, and conjecture. Destroy this volume; and you rob us of the consolatory expectation, excited by its predictions, that the stormy cloud which has so long hung over a suffering world, will at length, be scattered; and a brighter day succeed;—you forbid us to hope that the hour is approaching, when nation shall no more lift up sword against nation; and righteousness, peace, and holy joy, shall universally prevail; and allow us to anticipate noth-

ing, but a constant succession of wars, revolutions, crimes, and miseries, terminating only with the end of time. Destroy this volume; and you deprive us, at a single blow, of religion, with all the animating consolations, hopes, and prospects which it affords; and leave us nothing but the liberty of choosing,—miserable alternative! between the cheerless gloom of infidelity, and the monstrous shadows of paganism. Destroy this volume; and you unpeople heaven; bar forever its doors against the wretched posterity of Adam; restore to the king of terrors his fatal sting; bury hope in the same grave which receives our bodies; consign all who have died before us, to eternal sleep, or endless misery; and allow us to expect nothing at death, but a similar fate. In a word, destroy this volume; and you take from us, at once, every thing, which prevents existence from becoming, of all curses, the greatest. You blot out the sun; dry up the ocean; and take away the atmosphere of the moral world; and degrade man to a situation, from which he may look up with envy to "the brutes that perish." Who then would not earnestly wish to believe the scriptures, even though they came to him, unattended with sufficient evidence of their divine origin? Who can be so much his own enemy, as to refuse to believe them, when they come attended with evidence, more than sufficient, to satisfy all, but the wilfully incredulous? Who, in this view of them, imperfect as it is, is prepared to say, that they are not

of all books the most important; that they ought not to be prized and studied as such, by all who possess them; and put, without delay, into the hands of all who do not? Were this inestimable treasure in the exclusive possession of any individual, would you not consider him as the most malevolent of beings, if he neglected to communicate it, as soon as possible, to his fellow-creatures? And if he were a stranger to the use of the press, would not the common feelings of humanity require him to spend whole nights, as did a wealthy merchant in the East, in transcribing it for their use? What possible excuse, then, can we assign, for neglecting to distribute this treasure, when the press affords us the means of doing it, at so trifling an expense? Will it be said, that few, or none of our fellow-citizens are destitute? It is a fact, within the knowledge of this society, that the deficiency of Bibles in this District, to say nothing of other places, is far greater, than they are able to supply. Will it be said, that none are destitute of the sacred volume, but in consequence of their own fault; and that they are therefore unworthy to receive such a gift? Admitting this to be the case, which in many instances, however, it is not, is this an excuse for neglecting them, which it becomes *us* to assign? Had God adopted such a rule in the distribution of his favors;—had he bestowed the Bible on none but the deserving; who among ourselves should ever have been favored with it? Will it be said, that the other

wants of the poor are so numerous and pressing, that nothing can be spared for the supply of this? But what other want can be so pressing, so deserving of immediate attention, as that of the Bible? In what other way can we, at an equal expense, do so much to alleviate the miseries, and promote, I will not say the eternal, but even the temporal happiness of the poor, as by putting into their hands a book, which contains such a mass of the most valuable and important information?—which is so eminently calculated to render them better, and consequently happier, in all the relations of life; which teaches them, "in whatever state they are therewith to be content;" and to look for the relief of their necessities to Him who "hears the young ravens when they cry;" and to whom they will never look in vain, while they take this precious volume for their guide. Were they experimentally acquainted with the worth of this volume, they would themselves feel the want of it to be the first, the most pressing of wants. Send us any famine, they would cry, but "a famine of the word of God." Keep your wealth; enjoy your possessions; give us but the Bible to smooth the path of life, and the bed of death; and we will envy none their possessions, but living, and dying, will bless you; though we should perish with hunger. Such *is* the language of the pious poor. Such, were it not for their vices or their ignorance, would be the language of all the poor; and who will deny, that their vices and ignorance

render it still more necessary, that they should be put in immediate possession of the Bible. In requesting you to assist in supplying them with it, this Society does not so much solicit you to confer a favor, as to share in a privilege;—the privilege of uniting with the pious and benevolent in all parts of the world, in the noble design of distributing the scriptures; and the still more enviable privilege of becoming "workers together with God," in diffusing the knowledge of Himself, and His will. With what has been already done; with what is now doing for the promotion of this God-like design, you are, in some measure, acquainted. You are not ignorant, that societies, for the gratuitous distribution of the scriptures, have been formed in all parts of the world; and that new societies, for the same purpose, are constantly forming. By the members of these various societies nearly a million of dollars was contributed during the past year; more than four hundred thousand dollars of which, were received by the British and Foreign Bible Society alone. To aid the efforts of these societies, not only have kings and princes lent their influence, and the rich opened their treasures; but the widow has cast in her two mites; the child has presented all his little hoard; servants have given a third part of their annual wages; and more than one military corps have offered a certain proportion of their pay. In consequence of these astonishing and unprecedented exertions, the sacred scriptures, or at least parts of them,

have already been printed and circulated in upwards of forty different languages and dialects. Shall we then be idle, while all ranks and denominations are thus actively engaged in this glorious work? While Britons, Russians, Swedes, Polanders, Germans, Swiss, Italians, Greeks, Africans, and Indians, are employed in diffusing the scriptures, shall Americans alone do nothing? Or shall we be last and least among Americans in favoring and promoting such a design? It is with no small reluctance we are obliged to confess, that in this rank, a very considerable part of this District may justly be placed. All that has been done here, has been done by, comparatively, a few. We speak with confidence, when we assert, that among all the societies which have been formed for the distribution of the scriptures, in our own, or in other countries, not one can be found which has received assistance so disproportionate to what might have been reasonably expected, as this.—And to what is the existence of this disgraceful fact to be ascribed? Are the inhabitants of this District less religious,—do they value the Bible less,—or their property more than others? This, we presume, you will not feel disposed to allow. Shall we not, then, do all in our power, to wipe off so foul a stain from this section of our country? Shall we give our destitute countrymen regret, that they were not born in any other part of the world, where they would have been supplied with the scriptures, rather than in this Christian land?

Shall the eye of Omniscience, while it surveys the globe, find here the only spot, where the water of life is not permitted to flow freely;—where the cry of the poor for Bibles is disregarded; and thus be provoked to take from us a gift, of which we seem not to know the worth? There is reason to believe that, unless we speedily and diligently exert ourselves, this will be the case. He, "who cannot lie," has declared, that "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the seas." The period in which this prediction will be fully accomplished, is now evidently and rapidly approaching. The greatest of those obstacles, which once opposed its fulfilment, are already removed or overcome; and it is more than probable, that before very many years have elapsed, there will be scarcely a human habitation on earth, unless indeed it be among ourselves, in which the Bible will not be found. Let us, then, engage as one man, in hastening the arrival of this glorious and long expected day. Let us give wings to the Bible. Let us guide this life-giving stream into every abode and cottage in our wilderness. And permit us to express a hope, that your assistance in promoting this design, will not be confined to the present occasion; but that you will aid our exertions, by becoming active members of this society. Above all, while engaged in conveying the Bible to others, let us beware of neglecting it ourselves. Let us bind it to our hearts as our most valuable treasure; study it with that reverence and

attention which its character demands, and submit implicitly to its decisions, as to "the lively oracles of God." Thus we shall be impressed with a conviction, far more strong and abiding than any external evidence can produce, *That all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*— Thus shall we be enabled by our own experience, to feel and adopt the language of the Psalmist, "*The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold; yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, or the honey comb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward.*"

SERMON II.

GOD'S WAYS ABOVE MEN'S.

ISAIAH LV. 8, 9.

FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, SAITH THE LORD. FOR AS THE HEAVENS ARE HIGHER THAN THE EARTH, SO ARE MY WAYS HIGHER THAN YOUR WAYS, AND MY THOUGHTS THAN YOUR THOUGHTS.

In the preceding verses, God commands and invites sinners to repent and embrace his offers of mercy. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." He was, however, aware, that the natural unbelief, the guilty fears and narrow views of sinners, would lead them to distrust these promises, and to turn the unspeakable good which they offer into an argument against their truth. He, therefore, proceeds, in our text, to caution them against judging of him by themselves, and measuring his thoughts and ways by their own dark, confused and limited conceptions. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are

higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." To illustrate the truth of this declaration, and to notice some particular instances in which it is strikingly manifest, is my present design.

1. God's ways and thoughts must be far above ours, because in situation and office he is exalted far above us. God is in heaven, and we are upon earth. We occupy the footstool, and he the throne. As the Creator and Preserver, he is, of course, the rightful Governor of the universe. All worlds, creatures and events are subject to his control, and he is under a blessed necessity of overruling and conducting all things in such a manner, as to promote, in the highest possible degree, his own glory and the universal good. In forming and executing his purposes, therefore, he must take into view not only present, but past and future circumstances and events; not the concerns of a single individual only, but those of the whole race of beings in heaven, earth, and all the worlds around us. Now consider, a moment, the extent and duration of Jehovah's kingdom. Think of the innumerable armies of heaven; the, perhaps, scarcely less numerous hosts of hell; the multitudes of the human race, who have existed, who now exist, and will hereafter exist on earth before the end of time. Then raise your eyes to the numerous suns and worlds around us. Borrow the telescope of the astronomer, and, penetrating far into the unfathomable recesses of the etherial regions,

see new suns, new worlds still rising into view. Consider that all we can discover is, perhaps, but a speck, a single sand on the shore, in comparison with what remains undiscovered; that all these innumerable worlds are probably inhabited by immortal beings, and that God's plan of government for this boundless empire must embrace eternity; —consider these things, and then say, whether God's purposes, thoughts, and ways, must not necessarily be high above ours, as the heavens are above the earth, or as his sphere of action exceeds ours. Must not the thoughts and ways of a powerful earthly monarch be far above those of one of his subjects, who is employed in manufacturing a pin, or cultivating a few acres of ground? Can such a subject be competent to judge of his sovereign's designs, or even to comprehend them? How far then must the thoughts and ways of the eternal Monarch of heaven, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, exceed ours; and how little able are we to judge of them, farther than the revelation, which he has been pleased to give, enables us.

2. God's thoughts and ways must be infinitely above ours, because his nature and perfections raise him infinitely above us. He is a self-existent, independent, all-sufficient, infinite, eternal, pure, and perfect intelligence. We are dependent, finite, imperfect, frail, dying creatures, fettered by gross, heavy bodies, and exposed to the influence of innumerable infirmities, temptations and preju-

dices, which bias and blind our reason. But, more particularly, God is infinitely superior to us in wisdom. He is the all-wise God. Even the foolishness of God, says the apostle, is wiser than men; and the angels, who are far above us in wisdom, are, in comparison with him, chargeable with folly. He must, therefore, be able to devise a thousand plans and expedients, and to bring good out of evil in numberless ways, of which we never could have conceived, and of which we are by no means competent to judge, even after they are revealed to us. If the ways and thoughts of a wise man are above those of a fool, how much more must the ways and thoughts of the all-wise God exceed ours.

Again. God is infinitely superior to us in knowledge. We are of yesterday and know nothing; our foundation is in the dust. We have little real knowledge of present objects and events; and of the future we are entirely ignorant, except so far as God has been pleased to reveal it. But God perfectly knows all things. He has a perfect knowledge of the properties and qualities of all creatures; for he made them what they are, and upholds them. He knows every thing that is now taking place in the universe; for he is every where present. He knows every thing that ever has occurred, or that ever will occur; for we are told that he sees the end from the beginning; that he calls things that are not as though they were; and that known unto God are all his works from the

beginning. At a single glance he looks through eternity and immensity, and takes into view, at once, the whole circle of existence. That this perfect knowledge must cause his thoughts and ways to be infinitely above ours, it is needless to remark. Are not the thoughts and ways of man above those of the brute? Are not the thoughts and ways of the parent above the comprehension of his new born infant? Do not our own change, as we increase in wisdom and knowledge? How far, then, must the thoughts and ways of the omniscient, infallible God exceed those of ignorant, short sighted and fallible men.

Farther. God is infinitely above us in power. We are weak and frail to a proverb; and our plans, ways, enterprizes, must conform to the weakness of our powers. But God is all-powerful; with him nothing is impossible. He can do numberless things, of which we can form no conception; and he can do what he does in an inconceivable variety of ways. This consideration alone, were there nothing else, would prove that his thoughts and ways are far above ours.

Again. God is eternal and unchangeable, while we are but of yesterday, and die, perhaps, to-morrow, and are continually changing, as our situation and circumstances change. Surely the thoughts and ways of such creatures cannot be suitable or proper for a being, who had no beginning, who cannot change, but is, yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same.

Once more. God is perfectly benevolent and holy; but we are entirely selfish and sinful. We love sin, that abominable thing which his soul hates. We care for nothing but our own private interest; while his concern is for the interests of the universe. Hence his thoughts, his affections, his maxims and pursuits, must be entirely different from ours. Do not the thoughts and ways of angels differ from those of devils? Do not even the thoughts and ways of good men differ widely from those of the wicked? How infinitely then must a perfectly holy God differ from us, polluted worms, who are dead in trespasses and sins! If man, at his best estate, and even angels themselves are incompetent to comprehend God's thoughts and ways, because he is infinitely superior to them in wisdom, and knowledge, and power; how unable must we be, since sin has blinded our understandings, hardened our hearts, defiled the whole man, debased all our faculties, and exposed us to innumerable temptations, prejudices and mistakes, which lead us to hate and shun the pure light of divine truth; to delude and deceive ourselves, and to form erroneous opinions respecting almost every thing around us; to call evil good, and good evil; to put sweet for bitter, and bitter for sweet; shadows for realities, and realities for shadows; darkness for light, and light for darkness. The pleasures, ways and pursuits of an oyster, enclosed in its shell, at the bottom of the sea, do not by any means differ so widely from those of the eagle,

that soars to the clouds and basks in the beams of the sun, as do the thoughts and ways of sinners from those of the infinitely benevolent and holy Monarch of the universe.

Having thus shown that the thoughts and ways of God must far surpass ours, I proceed, as was proposed,

II. To exhibit, particularly, some instances, in which this difference most strikingly appears.

1. In permitting the introduction and continued existence of natural and moral evil, God's ways and thoughts are very different from ours. Why he should permit angels or men to fall, we cannot tell. That he did permit them to fall, is certain; because, had he thought proper, he could, doubtless, have prevented their apostacy. It is also certain that he still permits the existence of natural and moral evil; because, if he chose, all things considered, to banish it from the universe, he could easily do it. But if we had been consulted, we should have decided that it was best that sin and its consequences should never enter the world; or, if they must enter, that they should be immediately banished. In this particular, therefore, God's thoughts and ways are evidently not like ours.

2. In appointing Adam to be the covenant head and representative of the human race, so that, if he stood, his posterity should stand, and if he fell, his posterity should fall, God did not act as we, probably, should have done. That he has done this, is evident from fact; for we find that sin and

its consequences do descend to every individual of the species; and we are told, that in Adam all die. But we should have thought it best to have no such constitution; but to have had the condition of every individual independent of that of every other. This method God did adopt with angels; and why he thought fit to adopt a different method with respect to us, he has not seen fit to inform us, and we cannot tell. It is, however, evident that, in this particular, God's thoughts and ways are above ours. The same may be said,

3. Of the difference he has made between our race and the fallen angels. For them no way of salvation was provided. To them no space for repentance, no day of grace, no offers of mercy were given; but their punishment immediately followed their offence. We, on the contrary, have space for repentance, and are favored with the offers of salvation, and the means of grace. Christ *took not hold of angels*, says the apostle; but he *took hold of the seed of Abraham.* But we should have thought no difference ought to be made; or, if either angels or men were to be left, that they should be saved rather than we; because they are of a higher rank in the scale of being. But God thought otherwise; and the only reason we can assign is, that so it seemed good in his sight.

4. In devising a way of salvation, and in providing a Saviour, God's thoughts and ways are very different from ours, and far, very far, above them. We should have thought, that, if God intended to

save sinners, he would bring them to repentance and save them, at once; or, at least, after suffering them to endure, for a season, the bitter consequences of their own folly and disobedience. We never should have thought of providing for them a Redeemer; still less should we have thought of proposing, that God's only Son, the Creator and Preserver of all things, should undertake this office; and, least of all, should we have expected, that he would, for this purpose, think it necessary to become man. If we had been informed that this was necessary, and it had been left to us to fix the time and manner of his appearing, we should have concluded that he ought to come soon after the fall; to be born of illustrious parents; to make his appearance on earth in all the splendor, pomp, and glory imaginable; to overcome all opposition by a display of irresistible power; and to ride through the world in triumph, conquering and to conquer. Such were the expectations of the Jews; and such, most probably, would have been ours. But never should we have thought of his being born of a virgin in abject circumstances; born in a stable, cradled in a manger, living for many years as a humble artificer; wandering, despised and rejected of men, without a place to lay his head, and, finally, arraigned, tried, condemned and crucified as a vile malefactor, that he might thus expiate our sins, and by his death, give life to the world. Had we been forewarned of these things, we should have considered them as too foolish, incredible and absurd to

obtain the smallest credit; and, instead of thinking them cunningly devised, should have thought them very clumsily contrived, fables, unworthy of the least notice or regard. And thus in fact they have appeared, and do still appear, to the wise men of this world; for, says the apostle, the cross of Christ is foolishness to them that perish. When the self-righteous Jews and vain-glorious Gentiles were told that one, who had been crucified as a malefactor, was the Son of God, the Creator of the world, the only Saviour of men, that his blood cleanses from all sin, and that without an interest in his merits they must perish forever,—they could find no language sufficiently strong to express their contempt and indignation; and the aid of the stake, the rack, and the cross, was called in to express what language could not. Yet this was the way which God thought proper to choose, and all things, which appear in the view of men so ridiculous, irrational and absurd, are, in his view, infinitely proper, wise and amiable; and display far more wisdom than all the works of creation, wonderful as they are. Surely, then, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways and thoughts higher than ours.

5. God's thoughts and ways differ widely from ours in his choice of means and instruments for propagating the religion of Christ. We should have thought that a religion, whose author had been crucified as a malefactor; a religion, which, instead of favoring and flattering the ruling pas-

sions, prejudices and propensities of men, directly opposed them all, and which was, therefore, exceedingly hateful to them,—would have needed the assistance of angels, or, at least, of the most powerful monarchs, the most enlightened sages, the most splendid natural and acquired abilities, to procure it success. But instead of such instruments, which we should have chosen, God saw fit to employ a handful of ignorant fishermen to effect this purpose, and even forbade them to use any human artifices to procure them success; but charged them to rely entirely on the effect of a faithful, simple, unadorned statement of the great truths of Christianity. Hence the language of the apostle, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are despised hath God chosen; yea, and things that are not to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence. For when, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

6. A wide difference between God's thoughts and ways, and our own, appears, when we consider the manner in which he dispenses the benefits which Christ has purchased, and the character and situation of those whom he chooses to make wise unto salvation. We should expect that, if such a Saviour were provided, all would be saved; and

that, if, for any reasons, this were impossible, the most noble, wise, rich and learned, or, at least, the most moral and amiable would always be called. But this, we see, is not the case. It is evident from scripture, if any thing can be, that all will not be saved, and it is also evident from observation, so far as we can see; for we find that multitudes appear to live and die without any spiritual knowledge of the Saviour, or preparation for heaven. We also find, both from scripture and observation, that it is not always the most wealthy, wise, or learned, nor even the most moral and amiable, who are called to embrace the gospel. Christ told the moral, but self-righteous pharisees, that the publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom of God before them. Hath not God, says St. James, chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom? Ministers and private christians very often find reason to acknowledge, that God's thoughts and ways are not like theirs; for he rarely converts such, as they think the most probable subjects of conversion; and while they are watching such persons, and daily hoping and expecting to see them embrace the truth, others, of whom, perhaps, they never thought, start up and seize the prize.

7. God's thoughts respecting the way in which men become partakers of the salvation of the Gospel, differ widely from ours. We all naturally suppose, that men are to be saved by their good works; by obeying the law; by subduing their sins; by

alms and prayers. But the gospel teaches us, that men are to be saved, not by working, but by believing; that we are saved by grace, through faith; and that to him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. This truth men neither love nor understand, and even after they are awakened and convinced of sin, it is one of the most difficult things imaginable to convince them that their pretended good works are no better than sins; and that if they ever obtain salvation, it must be by simply believing in the Son of God. In scarcely any thing do God's thoughts and ways differ so widely from ours, as in this great doctrine of salvation through grace—of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ.

Lastly. God's thoughts and ways are not as ours respecting the best methods of dealing with his people, and carrying on the work of grace in their souls after it is begun. When God delivered his people from Egyptian bondage, if he had led them by the nearest and most direct way to Canaan, they might have reached it in a very few days; and had they been consulted, they would probably have thought the nearest way the best. But God thought otherwise. So when God converts his people from sin to holiness, he could, if he pleased, render them perfectly holy at once; and they are often ready to imagine, that this would be much the better way, both for his glory and their own good. But, instead of adopting this method,

he grants them, at first, but small degrees of grace, and increases it in a very slow and gradual manner. He leads them round, for many years, through a wilderness beset with temptations, trials and sufferings, with a view to humble them, prove them, and show them all that is in their hearts. By the discoveries, which they make, of their own weakness, ignorance and propensity to sin, their pride is humbled; their self-confidence destroyed; their patience, meekness and candor are increased; the Saviour, and his method of salvation rendered more precious, and all ground for boasting forever excluded.

All these happy effects, however, are produced in a way which they would never have thought of; and it is a long time before they can be made to understand God's method of proceeding, so that they are often ready to say with Jacob, "All these things are against me!" when, in fact, every thing is working together for their good. Even when God answers their prayers, he very often does it in ways and by means, which they did not expect; and as often as they attempt to mark out a path for him in their own minds, so often they find themselves disappointed, and are constrained to confess, that his ways are not like theirs. Often too, when they contemplate their own unworthiness, their stupidity, their obstinacy, their inconsistencies, their propensity to backslide, to grieve their Saviour and requite him evil for good, notwithstanding the innumerable pardons and mercies they have receiv-

ed,—are they constrained to use the same language, and to cry, Lord, why am I saved? why are such favors heaped on a wretch so unworthy? Surely, this is not the manner of men—to adopt rebels and traitors, as children, and heap such honors and blessings upon them. What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God! Who is a God like unto thee, that forgivest iniquity, transgression and sin, and overcomest evil with good? If thy ways were not high above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth, we must have perished forever!

INFERENCES.

1. If God's ways and thoughts differ thus widely from ours, then it is no reasonable objection against the truth of any doctrine, or the propriety of any dispensation, that it is above our comprehension, and appears strange and mysterious to us. On the contrary, we should have reason to doubt the truth of the scriptures, and to suspect that they are not the word of God, if they did not contain many things, which appear mysterious, and which we cannot fully comprehend. In this case they would want one great proof of having proceeded from him, whose thoughts and ways must be infinitely above ours. Yet, my friends, all the objections which men make against the truth of revelation, or against any of its doctrines, are founded on the supposition, that God's ways and thoughts must be precisely like ours; and that if any thing

appears unreasonable or mysterious to us, it certainly is so, and, therefore, cannot proceed from God.

2. If God's thoughts and ways are thus high above ours, it must be abominable pride, impiety, folly and presumption in us to censure them even in thought. Yet how often men do this! How often do they, at least in their hearts, find fault with God's word, murmur at his dispensations, repine under afflictions, feel dissatisfied with his manner of governing the world, quarrel with his sovereignty in the bestowing of favors, and thus in effect say, that God is either unwise, unkind, or unjust, and that they could conduct things in a better manner! My friends, if this is not horridly impious and presumptuous, if it does not discover the most abominable pride, what does? For an illiterate peasant to censure the conduct of his prince, with the reasons of which he is utterly unacquainted; for a child of a week old to condemn the proceedings of his parent, would be nothing to this. We are told, that, if any man judgeth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. What folly and shame is it then to us to attempt to judge of God's conduct, when we know only so small a part of his ways, and know even this part but very imperfectly. An ancient writer tells us of a man, who, having a house for sale, carried a brick to market to exhibit as a specimen. You may, perhaps, smile at his folly in supposing that any purchaser would or could judge of a whole house,

which he never saw, by so small a part of it. But are not we guilty of much greater folly in attempting to form an opinion of God's conduct from that little part of it, which we are able to discover? In order to form a correct opinion of it, we ought to have a correct view of the whole; we ought to see the whole extent and duration of God's kingdom; to be equal to him in wisdom, knowledge, power, and goodness; in one word, we ought to be God ourselves; for none but God is capable of judging accurately of the conduct of God. Hence, whenever we attempt to judge of it, we do, in effect, set ourselves up as Gods, knowing good and evil. Well, therefore, may God reply to our vain, proud, and impious objections, 'Who is this, that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man, and I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou, when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Wilt thou disannul my judgment? wilt thou condem me, that thou mayest be righteous?' And while God may thus with propriety address each of us, it becomes us to reply with Job, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther. I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.'

3. From this subject we infer the reasonableness of faith. The very essence of faith consists in a humble, docile, childlike temper, which disposes us to embrace, without objecting or disputing, every thing which God reveals; and to believe that all his words and dispensations are, even though we cannot see how, perfectly right. Christians are often ridiculed for exercising this implicit faith in God, and believing what they cannot fully comprehend. But we appeal to every one present, whether, in so doing, they do not act reasonably. If God's ways and thoughts are thus high above ours, ought we not implicitly to believe all his declarations; to believe that all he says and does is perfectly right? Is it not reasonable for children thus to believe their parents? for a sick man to trust in a skilful physician? for a passenger unacquainted with navigation, to trust to the master of the vessel? for a blind man to follow his guide? If so, then it is certainly much more reasonable for such ignorant, shortsighted, fallible creatures, as we are, to submit and trust implicitly to an infinitely wise, good, and infallible Being; and when any of his words or works appear wrong, to ascribe it to our own ignorance, blindness, or prejudice, rather than to suppose that there is any thing wrong in him. Is it not more likely that we should be wrong or mistaken, than that God should be? If so, we ought to praise him, when his conduct appears wise and right, and to impute it to ourselves when it does not, and to believe and to submit to

him implicitly in all things. This is not only reasonable, but absolutely necessary to our happiness; for if God's thoughts and ways differ thus widely from ours, we must either believe that he is right and we wrong, or else feel unreconciled and dissatisfied. But if we feel unreconciled and dissatisfied we must be unhappy; for we cannot help ourselves. God will do as he pleases, whether we are pleased or not. On the contrary, if we exercise faith and submission to his will, and believe that all is right; that even when clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, then we shall be peaceful and happy. He will guide us by his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory. Then the cloud will be scattered; we shall see all things clearly, and understand the meaning of those truths, and the reason of those dispensations, which have appeared most mysterious and perplexing; for God's language to every sincere believer is, *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

SERMON III.

ALL THINGS CREATED FOR CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS I. 16.

ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY HIM AND FOR HIM.

By whom were all these worlds and beings made? is, probably, the first question, which a view of the created universe would excite in a seriously inquisitive mind. For what purpose and with what view were they created? would no less probably be the second. There are two inspired passages, one in the Old Testament and the other in the New, which contain a direct answer to both these questions. In the Old Testament we are told, that Jehovah hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil: and in the New, that all things were created by Christ and for Christ. At first view these passages appear to differ, not only in language, but in sentiment. The former asserts that Jehovah made all things. The latter declares that all things were created by Christ. The former assures us that Jehovah made all things for *himself*; the latter that all things were created *for Christ*. To those, however, who believe that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New, these apparently different assertions will appear perfectly consistent. They will recollect and readily assent to the declaration of our Lord, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; I and

my Father are one; and will feel that the expression, Jehovah hath made all things for himself, is synonymous with the declaration in our text, All things were created by Christ and for him.

In discoursing on this passage we shall endeavor to illustrate, particularly, the general assertion, that all things were created for Christ. That none may suspect us of asserting more than our text will warrant, it may be proper to quote the remaining part of the verse which contains it. "By him," says the apostle speaking of Christ, "were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." From this passage it appears that there are invisible, as well as visible creatures; things in heaven, as well as things on earth. But whether visible or invisible, whether in heaven or on earth, they were all created for Christ; all created to promote his glory and subserve his purposes. This I shall now attempt to illustrate in several particulars.

I. Heaven was created for Christ. That there is a place called heaven, where the presence of God is specially manifested, and which is, in a peculiar sense, the habitation of his holiness and glory, is abundantly taught by the inspired writers. Some, it is true, have supposed that heaven is only a state of happiness, and not a place; but the supposition may be easily shown to be groundless; for, though God is every where, and though his

presence would render any place a heaven to holy beings; yet the glorified body of Christ cannot be every where. A body, however purified and refined, must be in some place; and the place, where now exists the glorified body of our Redeemer, is heaven. Agreeably, St. Paul informs us, that Christ has entered into heaven itself; that he is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places; and he elsewhere speaks of desiring to depart and be with Christ. Our Saviour himself, in his last prayer, says, Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory. In addition to these proofs we may observe, that the bodies of Enoch and Elijah must have been in some place, since their removal from this world, and that the glorified bodies of the saints, which are to be raised at the last day, must be in some place after their resurrection. Heaven is, therefore, not only a state, but a place, as really a place as this world. And the same arguments which prove that there is such a place as heaven, prove that heaven was created on purpose for Christ. God, considered as a pure spirit, cannot be said to be in one place, any more than in another. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." Nay, more, the Psalmist says, "If I make my bed in hell, thou art there." God, therefore, considered as a spirit, had no occasion for a material heaven. Nor was there any need of such a place for the angels; for they also are spirits, and, wherever they are, they behold the face of God, so that to them

every place is heaven. But when God became incarnate in the person of Christ; when he became God manifest in the flesh, then a material heaven became necessary for the place of his residence; a place, to which his redeemed people might be brought, and where they might dwell with him and behold his glory. Agreeably, Christ speaks of heaven as a kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; and elsewhere he says to his disciples, I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also. It appears, then, that if God had not taken our nature into union with himself in the person of Christ; and if Christ had not redeemed the bodies of his people from the grave by his own death, there would have been no occasion for a material heaven; and, of course, none would have been created. It is not then for God, simply considered, but for God manifest in the flesh, or, in other words, for Jesus Christ, that heaven was originally formed. It was designed to be the royal city, the court, the palace, in which the King of Zion should dwell and reign with his redeemed people forever and ever.

II. The angels were all created for Christ. When forming the great scheme of redemption, God was pleased to determine that he would employ the agency of created, but highly exalted spirits in carrying it on. With this view the angels were created. They are employed in worshipping

Christ. When he brought the first begotten into the world he saith, let all the angels of God worship him. They are also employed by Christ in executing his purposes of love to his people. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation?" It would, perhaps be impossible, to point out a single work ever performed by them, which was not in some way connected with the work of redemption by Christ. Hence they are called his angels. Jesus Christ, says St. John, sent his angel. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. Among these exalted spirits thus created to be the worshippers and servants of Christ, some were found who fell from their first estate. Of what particular sin they were guilty, we are not informed; but in some way or other, they refused to perform the duties required of them, and were in consequence cast down from heaven to hell. But though from angels they are transformed to devils, they are still subject to Christ; he holds them in a chain which they cannot break, and overrules for the advancement of his kingdom all their endeavors to destroy it. For instance, were it not for their temptations, Judas had probably never betrayed his master, nor the Jews crucified him. How much this event, which they designed should overthrow his kingdom, tended to advance it, or, rather, how absolutely necessary it was to its advancement, you need not be told.

III. Hell was created for Christ. That hell is a

place, as well as a state, is evident from the fact, that the bodies of the wicked, as well as their souls, are doomed to inhabit it. It will be apparent, in what respects this place was created for Christ, if we consider, that, when he was appointed in the counsels of eternity to reign over his mediatorial kingdom, and to be the Judge of the world, it was foreseen that he would have rebellious, as well as loyal, subjects; and that for the restraint and punishment of the rebellious a prison would be necessary. Hell was, therefore, created for a prison, in which the enemies of Christ and of the peace and happiness of the universe should be confined. Hence its fires are said to be prepared for the wicked. In a word, it was designed, that, in Christ and in the scheme of redemption by him, a full exhibition should be made of all the glorious perfections of the divine character. And as heaven was created to serve as a theatre for the display of the glories of divine mercy, love and grace, so hell was created for the display of divine justice and wrath.

IV. This world was created for Christ. It was created, in the first place, for the display of his natural perfections; for the display of creative wisdom and power to angelic minds. Accordingly, we are told, that, when he laid the foundation of the earth, these sons of God sung his praises together and shouted for joy. It was created, in the second place, to serve as a stage on which he might display to all intelligent creatures his moral perfections, and especially on which he might

display the glories of an incarnate God, and act the wonders of the great scheme of redemption. It was also created to be a province of his dominions, the place where his mediatorial kingdom should be set up, and where his chosen people should be prepared by his grace for admission into his kingdom above. When it shall have served for all these purposes, when Christ shall have done with it, the end of its creation will be accomplished, and then the earth will of course be destroyed. Then the visible heavens, being on fire, will be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and earth with the works thereof shall be burnt up, and its destruction, no less than its creation, will display the perfection of its Creator.

V. The human race, and all the inferior inhabitants of the world, were created for Christ. They were created, in the first place, to shew his ability to form different kinds and orders of beings. By forming the inferior animals he displayed his power to create material beings, while his manifold wisdom appeared in the various qualities bestowed on them, and in their fitness for the various uses and elements for which they were designed. In the creation of man he farther showed his power to create beings who were both material and spiritual. The union of a material body with a spiritual, immortal soul, is a work, in some respects, more wonderful than any of his previous works of creation, and displays in a new and striking manner, that power, by which he was enabled to sub-

due all things to himself. To form such a being as man of such materials as the dust of the earth, and to endue him with a living soul, which should bear the image and likeness of God, must have appeared to angels impossible; and when they saw such a work accomplished, it must have given them new and enlarged views of the unlimited power and wisdom of its Author.

In the second place, the inhabitants of this world were created to be the subjects of Christ. It was intended that he should have a kingdom embracing all conceivable kinds or orders of created beings, from the highest archangel to the meanest insect, that he might have an opportunity of displaying his perfections in governing such a kingdom, in dispensing happiness suited to the capacities of the individuals of every kind, in adapting them all to their various uses and relations, and in causing all the parts of this complicated machine to work together for the accomplishment of his purposes, and in making them all the objects of his providential care.

In the third place, the human race was created, that Christ might display his infinite condescension in assuming their nature. In order to display this condescension in the most clear and striking manner, it was necessary that he should assume the nature of the lowest class of rational beings,—a nature subject to many evils and infirmities,—a nature, in which he might become visible, and act and speak in a visible manner. Had he taken the

nature of angels into union with his own, it would have been a less wonderful act of condescension, nor could the act have been made equally apparent; for angels are spiritual beings, and the divine nature of Christ is spiritual, and the union of two beings purely spiritual could not be made to appear so evidently, as the union of a spiritual being with our nature which is partly material. We can conceive of God manifest in the flesh much more clearly, than of God manifest in an angel. We may farther observe, that a part of the designed display of Christ's condescension consisted in his becoming subject to hunger, thirst, weariness and pain, and in his dying, in the nature which he assumed. He was to appear in the likeness of frail, sinful flesh. But angels are subject to none of these infirmities. They can neither hunger, nor thirst, nor be weary, nor die. Christ could not, therefore, appear in the nature of a sinful angel as he could in the likeness of sinful flesh. Hence, in order to the full display of his condescension, it was necessary that rational beings should be created inferior to angels, or, in other words, such beings as those which compose the human race.

In the fourth place, the human race was created that Christ might display all his perfections in their redemption. In this work is made the brightest and most wonderful display of those perfections which men or angels have ever seen. The glory of God appears most resplendent and full orbed in the face of Jesus Christ. Power, wisdom, good-

ness, justice, truth, love, mercy, grace and faithfulness, here shine with united lustre in full brilliancy, nor can we determine which appears most glorious or lovely. In God's other works, some drops of that overflowing fountain, some rays from that infinite sun, are seen; but in the work of redemption, in the glorious gospel of the blessed God, the whole Deity, the whole fulness of the Godhead, flows out in one boundless tide; a tide, which will forever fill to the brim every holy mind, and in which all holy beings will bathe with rapturous delight through eternity. Accordingly, we are told, that by the church is made known to principalities in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God; that in the work of redemption he made known the riches of his grace; that at the last day Christ shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe. Even the wicked, who refuse to submit to Christ, shall be made unwillingly to honor him; that the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. He now causes their wrath to praise him, and restrains the remainder. At the judgment day, they will all be compelled to bow to Jesus, and confess that he is Lord; and he will show his wrath and make his power known in their everlasting destruction.

REFLECTIONS.

1. What exalted ideas is this subject suited to give us of the dignity and glory of Christ. The

assertion, that all things were created by him, is sufficient to prove his divinity; for he, who built all things, must be God. But when, in addition to this, we are assured that all things were created *for* him, we have a proof of his divinity, which is, if possible, still more convincing; for, supposing for a moment, that God could and would employ a creature to perform the work of creation, can we suppose that he would permit that creature to create all things for himself, for his own pleasure or glory? Surely not. God has said, I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another. But if Christ be not God, all the divine glory is given to another. The glory of creating all things, of upholding all things, of governing all things, of redeeming and judging the world, is all given to Christ. Nay more, all things were created on purpose that the glory resulting from all might be given to Christ. If then Christ be not Jehovah, Jehovah's glory is all given to another, and nothing remains to himself. But view Christ as God manifest in the flesh, and the difficulty vanishes. Then in honoring the Son, we honor the Father. Then we shall understand why all the inhabitants of heaven are represented as ascribing joint glories to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb. By Him that sitteth on the throne, is meant the divine, and by the Lamb slain, the human nature of Christ. Both are inseparably united, and Christ's human nature is the temple in which Jehovah will

dwell, and in which he will be worshipped by saints and angels through eternity.

2. From this subject we may learn, that, if we would view every object in its true light, and rightly estimate its nature and design, we must consider it with reference to Christ and his cross. To the cross of Christ all eternity has looked forward: to the cross of Christ all eternity will look back. The cross of Christ was, if I may so express it, the first object which existed in the divine mind; and with reference to this great object all other objects were created. With reference to the same object they are still preserved. With reference to the same object every event, that takes place in heaven, earth and hell, is directed and overruled. Surely, then, this object ought to engage our undivided attention. We ought to regard this world merely as a stage, on which the cross of Christ was to be erected, and the great drama of the crucifixion acted. We ought to regard all that it contains as only the scenes and draperies necessary for its exhibition. We ought to regard the celestial luminaries merely as lamps, by the light of which this stupendous spectacle may be beheld. We ought to view angels, men and devils as subordinate actors on the stage, and all the commotions and revolutions of the world as subservient to this one grand design. Separate any part of this creation, or any event that has ever taken place, from its relation to Christ, and it dwindles into insignificancy. No sufficient reason can be assigned for its existence,

and it appears to have been formed in vain. But when viewed as connected with him, every thing becomes important; every thing then appears to be a part of one grand, systematic, harmonious whole; a whole worthy of Him that formed it. It was such a view of things, which led the apostle to exclaim, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, if we view the cross of Christ in the same light in which it was viewed by the apostle, we shall soon find it producing similar effects upon ourselves, and shall experience the emotions and adopt the language of that distinguished saint.

3. From this subject, my Christian friends, you may learn what reason you have for gratitude and joy. You, as well as all other objects and beings, were created for Christ. You were created on purpose to promote his glory and execute his will. Nay more, you were created on purpose to be his servants, his friends, his members; you were created that he might redeem you by his blood, sanctify you by his grace, dwell in you by his spirit, form in you his image, raise you to heaven by his power, and shew forth the unsearchable riches of his glory in you, as vessels of mercy, through eternity. You were created that, at the last day, Christ, your exalted Redeemer and Lord may be glorified in you, as his work, and admired, as he will be, in all them that believe. You were created, that, like so many moons, you may revolve around Christ the Sun of Righteousness, drink in

light, and love, and glory, from his beams, and reflect those beams to the admiring eyes of fellow saints and angels forever and ever. Yes, these are the great and benevolent purposes for which you were created and destined; you were beloved with an everlasting love; and with loving kindness you were drawn to Christ, that these purposes might be fulfilled. And they shall be all fulfilled. They are the purposes of him with whom designs and actions are the same; who never changes, and who will not, cannot, be disappointed. O then, what a gift is the gift of existence, endless existence, given for such purposes as these! What reason have you to rejoice in such a gift, and to bless the free, great and glorious Giver! Can you find love for any thing else? Can you find affections for any other object? Can you waste admiration on any thing besides? If you were thus created for Christ, ought not all your powers and faculties to be devoted to him? Ought not your whole soul to be engrossed and swallowed up by this infinitely worthy object? Ought you not always to remember that you are not your own, that you are bought with a price, that you are bound by every tie to glorify Christ in your bodies and in your spirits which are his? This indeed you have covenanted and vowed to do. Come then, with willing minds, and hearts broken with contrition, bursting with admiration, and glowing with love, and zeal, and renew your covenant engagements afresh, at Christ's table. Come and see him, by whom and for whom

all things were created, dying and dead for you. See his flesh freely offered as your food. See his blood no less freely presented to wash away your stains. Hear him, who is Lord and heir of all things, addressing you in the tenderest expressions of infinite, consolatory love, saying, Come, my sister, my spouse, to my table: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved. Drink, and remember your sorrows no more. Drink, and remember the man of sorrows, who sorrowed and died that your sorrows might cease. Drink, and remember him, who is now preparing a mansion for you in heaven; who will soon come again and receive you to himself, and drink the fruit of the vine new with you in the kingdom of my Father forever. And while you remember this inestimable Friend, and listen to him thus adddressing you, reply, Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. And until he shall come, exclaim with united voices, Now unto him, who hath loved, and created, and redeemed us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory, and honor, and dominion, forever and ever.

SERMON IV.

THE WAY WHICH WICKED MEN HAVE TRODDEN.

JOB, XXII. 15, 16, 17.

HAST THOU MARKED THE OLD WAY, WHICH WICKED MEN HAVE TRODDEN? WHICH WERE CUT DOWN OUT OF TIME, WHOSE FOUNDATION WAS OVERTHROWN WITH A FLOOD: WHICH SAID UNTO GOD, DEPART FROM US; AND WHAT CAN THE ALMIGHTY DO FOR THEM?

WIDE, says our Divine Teacher, is the gate, and broad is the way, which leadeth to destruction; and many there be who go in thereat. Of this broad way Eliphaz here speaks. Inferring from the unprecedented afflictions of Job, that he must be a wicked man, he asks him whether he had duly considered the old way which had been trodden by other wicked men of former ages, who were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overthrown with a flood.

My hearers, this is an important question, a question which may be very properly addressed to all, and from which the most salutary consequences may result. If any of you have not suitably considered the way which wicked men have trodden, you may even now be ignorantly pursuing it; nor can any be sure, that he has forsaken this way, unless he knows what it is. Permit me then to address this question to you,—Have you marked, have you duly considered the way of wicked men, and the end to which it leads? If you have not,

let me request your attention while I endeavor, by the light of revelation, to *trace this way*, to show *in what it consists*, and *what is its termination*.

I. Let us consider the way itself. In tracing it, it will be proper to begin at its commencement. It was, you will observe, even in the time of Eliphaz, an old way, a way which had long been trodden. Indeed, it is almost as old as the human race, or as the world which they inhabit; for it was formed in the days of our first parents, at the time when they ate of the forbidden fruit. Then the wide gate, which leads into the broad way, was opened; and, alas, it has never since been closed. By carefully attending to the conduct of those, who first formed the way, and first walked in it, we may learn in what it consists. It is thus described by the inspired historian: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food; and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

In this account of the conduct of the first sinner we see, in the first place, *selfishness*, or a preference of herself to God; for had she loved him supremely, she would have chosen to obey his commands, rather than to gratify herself. This must ever be the first sin; for so long as any creature prefers God to himself, he will choose to please God rather than to gratify himself; of course, he will avoid every sin, and no temptation

will induce him to offend his Maker, while he loves him with all his heart. But so soon as any creature begins to prefer himself to God, he will choose to gratify himself, rather than please his Maker; and will, of course, commit any sin, which promises him self gratification or self aggrandizement.

The second thing to be noticed in the conduct of the first sinner, is *pride*. She saw that it was a tree to be desired to make one wise; that is, she fancied, as the tempter had asserted, that it would cause her to become as a god, knowing good and evil. Now this wish was the effect of pride; and it was accompanied by the inseparable attendant of pride, discontent—discontent with the situation in which God had placed her. This sin is the natural consequence of selfishness; for as soon as we begin to prefer ourselves to God, we shall wish to put ourselves in the place of God, and to rise above the sphere of action which he has assigned us, and to grasp at those things which he has not thought proper to bestow.

The third thing in her conduct, the third step in the way of sin, was *sensuality*, or a disposition to be governed and guided by her senses, and to seek their gratification in an unlawful manner. She saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes. Here was something to gratify two of the senses, those of tasting and seeing; and this gratification, though forbidden, she was determined to enjoy. The influence of sin, which

had hitherto existed only in the passions of the mind, began to extend itself to the appetites of the body, and by this influence they were inflamed to such a degree, that they prompted her to disregard the dictates of reason and conscience, and the commands of God.

The next step in the fatal way, was *unbelief;* a distrust of God's word, and a consequent belief of the tempter's suggestions. God had said, In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die. This threatening she now disbelieved. The tempter said, God doth know that ye shall not surely die; but in the day that ye eat of it, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. This falsehood she did believe. This disbelief of God's word, and belief of satan's suggestions, were the natural consequence of sins already mentioned; for when the passions and appetites are inflamed by the influence of sin, they immediately blind the understanding in such a manner, that it can no longer discover the evidence which attends divine truth, nor the force of those arguments and motives, which should induce us to obey it. Every thing which is urged against a compliance with our sinful inclinations then appears weak and groundless; while those sophistical reasonings, which favor their gratification, seem powerful and conclusive. In this state, therefore, the mind is completely prepared to disbelieve the God of truth, whose word opposes and forbids its sinful inclinations, and to believe the father of lies, who urges

us to gratify them. And this, in fact, is the source of all the unbelief which prevails in the world; for the evidence attending God's word, is so convincing, that men never would, never could disbelieve, did they not first wish to disbelieve it.—But, to proceed, God's threatenings being thus disbelieved, and the lies of the tempter embraced as truth, every barrier, which opposed her progress, was removed; and the sinful propensities, that have been mentioned, broke out into open, actual disobedience. She took of the fruit of the tree and did eat. Thus she made a full entrance into that way, which wicked men have ever since trodden. The first step was selfishness; the second, pride; the third, sensuality; the fourth, unbelief; and the last, actual, open, wilful disobedience. To the same result every one will come, who begins to tread in her steps. Selfishness, pride, and sensuality, will lead them in pursuit of forbidden objects up to the gate which opposes their progress in the broad way; a gate, which is secured by God's awful threatenings. Unbelief, by disregarding these threatenings, will draw back the bolts, and then actual disobedience will burst open the gate, and hurry them onward, without restraint, in the broad way. And as the first sinner was unwilling to walk in this way alone, and became a tempter, by presenting the fatal fruit to her husband, and persuading him to eat; so all, who have since walked in it, have wished for companions, and enticed their relatives, friends, and acquaintances to follow them.

But without insisting on this, let us trace the farther progress of the first sinners in their fatal career. Though they had disbelieved God's threatenings, they soon found, as, sooner or later, all sinners will find, that their unbelief did not render them false, or prevent their fulfilment. Before the close of the day, which they had stained by their disobedience, their offended Maker came to call them to an account; and from their conduct on that occasion, we may obtain a further acquaintance with the way in which sinners walk.

They exhibited sullen hardness of heart, impenitence, and despair of forgiveness. They expressed no sorrow, or penitence, nothing like brokenness of heart. They made no confession of sin; they uttered no cries for mercy; they expressed no wish to be restored to the favor of their offended Judge.

They displayed a self-justifying temper. Adam attempted to throw the blame upon his wife; and she, in turn, endeavored to transfer it to the serpent.

They showed a disposition to reflect upon God, as the cause of their disobedience. The woman, whom *thou* gavest to be with me, she gave me of the fruit of the tree, and I did eat.

In a manner precisely similar have sinners ever since conducted. They will not confess their sins; they will not repent of them; they will not cry for mercy; they will not seek the favor of their offended God. On the contrary, they excuse and justify

themselves, and indirectly cast the blame of their sinful conduct upon Jehovah, by saying, the passions, appetites, and inclinations, which *thou* gavest us, have led us to act as we have done. This hard, impenitent, self-justifying temper, taken in connection with those things which were previously mentioned, constitute the old way, which wicked men have trodden. Of this we shall be convinced by examining the temper and conduct of successive generations of sinners; and making proper allowance for the different circumstances in which they were placed. Such, for instance, was the way trodden by that generation of mankind, which was destroyed by the flood. I mention this generation, partly, because there is an evident allusion to it, in our text; partly, because their situation resembled our own more nearly than did the situation of our first parents; and, partly, because we have in the writings of Moses, and in the discourses of our Saviour, a more particular account of their temper and conduct, than is given of any other generation in those early ages of the world. Now from this account we find, that they were guilty of the same sins, that they walked in the same path, which has already been described.

In the first place, they were guilty of selfishness and pride. Their sinful passions they displayed in their disregard of the rights of their neighbors, in their contests for superiority; in consequence of which the earth was filled with violence, as, we have abundant reason to believe, it would now be,

did not human laws restrain, in some degree, the passions of men.

In the second place, the persons who composed this generation, were sensual and earthly minded, governed by appetites and passions rather than by reason, conscience and the law of God. This appears from the account given us of their alliances and connections, in forming which they seem to have regarded nothing but external appearances, choosing for their partners in life the irreligious, immoral, and profane. That this was a distinguishing trait in their character, as well as that of the Sodomites, who lived some ages after them, appears from the account given of their conduct by our Saviour. As it was in the days of Noah, says he, so shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, they married and were given in marriage, and knew, or considered not, till Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. This, my hearers, is a most accurate description of worldly minded, wicked men; of men completely under the control of their appetites and passions, and regardless of every thing but the present life, with its transitory objects and pursuits. From this account it also appears, that they were guilty of unbelief, impenitence, hardness of heart, and a consequent neglect of the day and means of grace, and the offers of salvation. To this unbelief and hardness of heart alone can it be ascribed, that

they did not know, or as the word signifies, did not consider, till the flood came and destroyed them; for they were most clearly, and for a long time, warned of its approach. God allowed them a reprieve of one hundred and twenty years, during which Noah, as a preacher of righteousness, reproved them for their sin, and warned them of the approaching deluge, and pointed out the only possible way of escape. In addition to their neglect of his warnings, they resisted the strivings, the influences of the divine Spirit; for we are told, that Christ, by his Spirit, went and preached to them, and that God said respecting them, My Spirit shall not always strive with man; nevertheless his days shall be a hundred and twenty years—thus plainly intimating, that, during that time, his Spirit should continue to strive with them. And to what cause is it to be ascribed, that, though thus favored, thus warned, they did not consider, till it was too late? To their unbelief and hardness of heart—the two great causes, to which it is still owing, that, notwithstanding the preaching of the gospel, the offers of salvation, and the strivings of God's Spirit, men will not consider their latter end, nor fly to the Saviour for refuge from the wrath to come. This account of the way, in which antediluvian sinners walked, is the more deserving our attention, because our Saviour informs us, that in the same way sinners will be found walking, when he comes to judge the world. Now if sinners trod this way four thousand years ago;

and if they will be still found pursuing it at the end of time; we may fairly infer, that they have walked in it ever since the days of Noah, and that they are following it at the present day; an inference, which is abundantly verified by the history of the Jews, and their heathen neighbors, by the writings of the prophets, by the preaching of Christ and his apostles, and by the present character and conduct of sinners.

There is, however, a way, which many wicked men have trodden, that appears to differ very widely from this, though it is in reality the same—a modification of it produced by the influence of a religious education, or of an awakened conscience operating upon a selfish, sinful heart. This way it is necessary to describe particularly, lest those who are following it should be deceived, and fancy that they are walking, not in the old way which wicked men have trodden, but in the narrow path of life. To understand in what the way of which I am speaking consists, it should be recollected, that, immediately after the fall of man, God was pleased to reveal a way, in which sinners might be reconciled, return to him, escape the punishment which they deserve, and regain his forfeited favor. This way consists in repentance towards God, and faith in a Mediator of God's providing, and reliance upon an atonement for sin made by that Mediator. This way of salvation was at first revealed to mankind in an imperfect manner, under a veil of types and shadows. The atonement, which

Christ, the Lamb of God, intended to make in the fulness of time, was typically represented by the sacrifice of a lamb without spot or blemish. His human nature, in which, as in a temple, dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, was represented by a tabernacle, and afterwards by a temple, in which God manifested his presence in a sensible manner, and in which his worshippers might approach, while the mediatorial or priestly office of Christ was shadowed forth in the appointment of an order of men, who acted as mediators between God and man, presenting the sacrifices of men to God, and pronouncing the blessing of God upon men. Now that modification of the way trodden by wicked men, which we are at present considering, consists in rejecting the Mediator, and the atonement which God has provided, and substituting something else in their place. In other words, it consists in presumptuously attempting to approach God in a way of our own devising, instead of that way which he has provided. The first wicked man, who walked in this way, was Cain. While his righteous brother, Abel, agreeably to God's appointment, offered a lamb in sacrifice, as an atonement for his sin, Cain presented nothing but a gift of the fruits of the earth, disbelieving the great truth, that, without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin; and showing, that he did not regard himself as a sinner, who needed an atonement. The consequence was such as might have been expected. The sacrifice of Abel, offer-

ed in faith and in obedience to the requisitions of God, was accepted; while the offering of the self-righteous Cain was rejected—a circumstance, which led him to murmur against God, to envy, hate, and, at length, murder his brother. In the way thus marked out and trodden by Cain, we find the wicked Jews in all ages of their history exceedingly prone to walk. Neglecting the temple where God dwelt, and the priests or mediators whom he had appointed, they erected high places and planted groves, in which they pretended to worship Jehovah, though in a way directly contrary to his commands; and, like Cain, they hated and persecuted those, who approached God in his own appointed way, and endeavored to convince them of the folly and sinfulness of their conduct. In the same way their descendants were found walking in our Saviour's time. Instead of embracing him as the only Saviour, approaching God through him as the Mediator, and relying on his atonement and intercession for acceptance, they depended on their own works, their religious ceremonies, their alms, fastings, prayers and moral duties. Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they went about to establish their own, and refused to submit to the righteousness of God. And because our Saviour and his apostles assured them, that, in this way, they could never be justified or saved, they hated, persecuted, and put them to death. Soon after the death of the apostles, the Christian church began to apostatize from the faith, to forsake the way of

life, and to walk in the way we are describing. They lost the power of Godliness, but multiplied its forms, and substituted ceremonies, as a ground of dependence for salvation. Hence the Christian church gradually degenerated into the Church of Rome. Neglecting Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man, they prayed to angels, to the virgin Mary, and to departed saints, as mediators; and, instead of relying on his merits and atonement, they substituted in their room penances, bodily austerities, superstitious observances, and the endowment of churches and monasteries, by which they vainly hoped to atone for their sin, and obtain the favor of God. In a way, which is essentially the same, many walk at the present day. They depend for salvation on their religious services, their moral duties, their liberality to the poor, their orthodox sentiments, or on a profession of religion; while they neglect the atonement and intercession of Christ, the only sure foundation, the only way of access to the Father, and, like their predecessors, hate, though they cannot persecute, those, who warn them that their way is false, and their confidence vain.

From what has been said, it appears, that this way, though apparently different from that in which openly wicked men walk, is essentially the same; and that it conducts, of course, to the same end. Its principal characteristics are self-righteousness and pride, flowing from ignorance of God and of ourselves, attended by a disbelief of the gospel,

impenitence, and a substitution of something else in the place of Christ, as a ground of dependance. Wicked men, then, may be ranked in two classes; the one having no religion, the other, a false religion. The first follow the tempter in his own proper shape, as an angel of darkness; the second are deceived, and led to him in the garb of an angel of light. The first walk openly in the broad road to destruction, without fear or remorse; the second follow the same road, but are so blinded by ignorance and unbelief, that they mistake it for the path of life.

Having thus marked the old way which wicked men have trodden, let us consider,

II. Its termination. Our Saviour informs us, that it leads to destruction. That it does so, we might infer from what has taken place in this world. It led our first parents out of paradise, out of a state of holiness and happiness into a state of sin and misery; out of the clear light of the knowledge and favor of God into a land of darkness and the shadow of death. It led Cain into the guilt of murder, the murder of a brother, and banished him from the presence of God, and constrained him to cry, My punishment is greater than I can bear! For walking in this way the antediluvian sinners were cut down out of time, prematurely, being overwhelmed by a flood; the men of Sodom were destroyed by a fiery storm from heaven; the Jews were scourged by a long series of calamities, terminating with their complete destruction by the

Romans. What calamities have since befallen the Romish church, and successive generations of sinners, I need not inform you. But if we would see the final termination of this old way, we must go into the sanctuary of God, and look through the glass of revelation into eternity. There we shall see that this way leads directly down to the gates of hell. We are there taught, that the souls of those, who were destroyed by the flood, are now spirits in prison, the prison of God's wrath; and may, therefore, fairly infer, that the souls of other wicked men, who have since been cut down out of time, are in the same situation. We are there told, that there is no peace to the wicked; that destruction and misery are in their paths; that they are driven away in their wickedness; that they shall go away into everlasting punishment. In a word, all the inspired writers cry with one voice, Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him. Indeed, it is evident from the very nature of things, that these declarations must be true; that such a way as we have described can lead to nothing but endless misery.

APPLICATION.

Having endeavored to trace the old way which wicked men have trodden, to show in what it consists, and what is its termination; permit me, in applying the subject, to inquire,

1. Whether some of you are not walking in this

way? Are none of you guilty of selfishness in preferring your own gratification to the glory of God and the happiness of your fellow creatures? Are none of you influenced by pride and discontent to murmur at the situation in which God has placed you, and to attempt to rise above it, by recurring to means which he has forbidden? Are none of you controlled by your sinful appetites, and passions, and inclinations, rather than by reason, conscience, and the fear of God? Have these evil counsellors led none of you to desire, and to eat forbidden fruit; to gratify them in a way, or to a degree, which the law of God forbids? Do none of you disbelieve God's solemn declarations, that the soul who sinneth shall die; that the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all who forget him? Are none of you worldly minded, living a careless, irreligious life; acting as if your sole business was to obtain and enjoy what it affords? Are none of you excusing and justifying your conduct at your Creator's expense, saying, in your hearts, the appetites, passions, and inclinations, which *thou* gavest me, cause me to conduct as I do? If you avoid open sins, are none of you neglecting repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; substituting your own works or merits in the place of his atonement; trusting to your own prayers rather than to his intercession, and thus, like the Jews, going about to establish your own righteousness? These things, you will recollect, constitute the old way, which wicked men in all ages have

trodden; and if they are to be found in your temper and conduct, then you are walking in that way.

If you feel unable to determine with certainty what path you are pursuing, permit me to mention three things, which may assist you in determining where you are. In the first place, remember there are but two ways mentioned in scripture, in one or the other of which every man is walking. One is that which has now been described, the old and broad way which wicked men have trodden, and which leads to destruction; the other is the narrow, good old way, marked out by the Son of God, in which patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs have walked, and which leads to life. Now since there are only these two ways, it is evident, that all who are not walking in the latter are pursuing the former. Inquire then whether you are in the latter, the narrow path. It is totally, and in every respect, unlike the former. Those who walk in it are supremely influenced, not by selfishness, but by that love which seeketh not her own; not by pride, but by humility; not by discontent, but by constant acquiescence in the will of God. Instead of indulging and seeking to gratify their appetites and passions, they deny, mortify, crucify them; instead of disbelieving God's threatenings, they believe them, as well as his promises; they are heavenly and not earthly minded; they condemn, instead of justifying themselves; they rely for acceptance and salvation, not on any work or merits of their own, but on the atonement and

intercession of Christ alone; and in dependance on his grace live a life of selfdenial, watchfulness and prayer, endeavoring to walk even as he walked. If this, my hearers, is not your character; if you are not walking in this path; then you are most certainly in the old way which wicked men have trodden; for there is no middle path. He that is not with Christ is against him.

Again—remember that in the way of the wicked, all men naturally walk. This the scriptures abundantly assert. Says the prophet, All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. And again, The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, and, behold, they are all gone out of the way. Since then all are naturally out of the way of life, and in the broad road to death; it is evident, that, if you have never forsaken this road, if a great change has not taken place in your feelings, views, character and conduct, you are in the broad road still. I do not say that it is necessary to know precisely the time and the manner, in which this change, this passing from one road to the other, took place. But I say it is absolutely necessary, that it should take place. And if you have never been convinced that you are in the broad road, convinced that it is a sinful and dangerous road, then you have not forsaken it. Says our Saviour, Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Now is it possible that a man should strive to enter in at the straight

gate, and still know nothing of it? Yet, if you have not striven to enter it, you are yet in your sins.

Once more—we are taught, that the old way trodden by wicked men, is the way of the world, and a crowded way. Many there be, says Christ, who go in thereat. Says the apostle to the Ephesians, In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we all had our conversation, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. The narrow path, on the contrary, is trodden by a comparatively small number; few there be, says our Saviour, that find it. If then you would know in which path you are walking, inquire whether you have many or few companions; whether you are walking with the world, or contrary to it. If you find yourselves in a crowded road, then you are in the broad road. If you are walking with the majority of mankind, then are you most certainly walking in the old way, which wicked men have trodden.

2. Should any of you be convinced by these remarks that you are in this dangerous way, permit me to apply the subject further, by urging you to forsake it without delay. Consider, O consider, whither it leads, and whither it has led those, who followed it in former ages. Consider, too, what God has done to turn you from it. He has clearly described it in his word. He has there traced it,

as on a map, from its commencement to its fatal termination. All along the path he has set up way marks with the inscription, *This road conducts to hell;* while a hand, pointing to a narrow path, which opens to the right, has written over it, *This path leads to heaven.* Lest you should be so occupied by the cares and business of the world, as to pass these way-marks without noticing them, he has placed at each of them a watchman to warn thoughtless travellers, and to call their attention to these inscriptions; and lest any should rush on without stopping to hear their warnings, he has placed the Sabbath, like a gate, across their path to compel them to stop till it be opened, and to hear the warning voice. To one of these gates, my impenitent hearers, you have now come. It has compelled you to pause, a few moments, in your sinful career; and, to pass away the time till the Sabbath is gone, you have come to the house of prayer. Here is a watchman appointed by your Creator. I stand to call your attention to the inscriptions which he has recorded; to the marks which he has drawn of the various paths in which men walk. Sinner, stop. I have a message to thee from God. See it written with his own finger, *This broad road leads to destruction!* Look at the map which he has drawn. See here a way opening out of the gates of paradise, leading on, broad and crooked, through the mazes of the world, and terminating at the iron gate of the bottomless abyss. See written on its margin, *Destruction and misery are in this path; it*

leads down to the chambers of eternal death. This is the path of the openly irreligious. See close by its side another path, opened by the first murderer. See written on it, *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof is death.* This is the path of the self righteous, the formalist, the hypocrite, and, like the other, leads to death. Sinners, you have seen this path; it it yours; it is the path in which you are now walking. You have also seen its end. Let it be yours then no longer. This day, this hour, forsake it, and enter that path, which opens to the right hand. Here you may see it; and the straight gate, which leads into it, opens to every one who knocks. Close by its side stands a cross; rays of light darting from it, illuminate and mark out the path. Just within the gate stands an invisible guide, with extended hand offering to lead, to assist, to support you; while at the termination are the wide open gates of heaven, from which issue a flood of glory, which you will discover more and more clearly, as you approach them. O, then, enter this path. Strive, strive to enter in at the straight gate.—Will you reply, I know not what to do. I am in utter darkness. I see not the gate, nor the way, nor the cross. Then cry earnestly for light. Let your heart be towards the king's highway, and light will soon shine upon your steps. Above all, take not another step in the fatal road, which you have hitherto pursued. Pass not this Sabbath, this warning way-mark, lest you never see another.

SERMON V.

SINS ESTIMATED BY THE LIGHT OF HEAVEN.

PSALM XC. 8.

THOU HAST SET OUR INIQUITIES BEFORE THEE, OUR SECRET SINS IN THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE.

It is a well known fact, that the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are very much affected by the situation in which they are placed with respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. Objects seen at a distance, for example, appear much smaller than they really are. The same object, viewed through different mediums, will often exhibit very different appearances. A lighted candle, or a star, appears bright during the absence of the sun; but when that luminary returns, their brightness is eclipsed. Since the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are thus affected by extraneous circumstances, it follows, that no two persons will form precisely the same ideas of any object, unless they view it in the same light, or are placed with respect to it in the same situation.

These remarks have a direct and important bearing upon the intended subject of the present discourse. No person can read the scriptures candidly and attentively, without perceiving, that God and men differ very widely in the opinion which they entertain respecting almost every object. And

in nothing do they differ more widely, than in the estimate which they form of man's moral character, and of the malignity and desert of sin. Nothing can be more evident than the fact, that, in the sight of God, our sins are incomparably more numerous, aggravated, and criminal, than they appear to us. He regards us as deserving of an endless punishment, while we scarcely perceive, that we deserve any punishment at all. Now whence arises this difference? The remarks, which have just been made will inform us. God and men view objects through a very different medium, and are placed with respect to them in very different situations. God is present with every object; he views it as near, and therefore sees its real magnitude. But many objects, especially those of a religious nature, are seen by us at a distance, and, of course, appear to us smaller than they really are. God sees every object in a perfectly clear light; but we see most objects dimly and indistinctly. In fine, God sees all objects just as they are; but we see them through a deceitful medium, which ignorance, prejudice and self love place between them and us.

Apply these remarks to the case before us. The Psalmist, addressing God, says, Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. That is, our iniquities or open transgressions, and our secret sins, the sins of our hearts, are placed, as it were, full before God's face, immediately under his eye; and he sees them in the pure, clear, all-disclosing light

of his own holiness and glory. Now if we would see our sins as they appear to him, that is, as they really are; if we would see their number, blackness and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, we must place ourselves, as nearly as is possible, in his situation, and look at sin, as it were, through his eyes. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle, which is irradiated by the light of his countenance, where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn, and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen, and almost forgotten, and where, consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived,—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works, and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

Let us then, my hearers, attempt this adventurous flight. Let us follow the path by which our blessed Saviour ascended to heaven, and soar upward to the great capital of the universe, to the palace, and the throne of its greater King. As we rise, the earth fades away from our view; now we leave worlds, and suns, and systems behind us. Now we reach the utmost limits of creation; now the last star disappears, and no ray

of created light is seen. But a new light now begins to dawn and brighten upon us. It is the light of heaven, which pours in a flood of glory from its wide open gates, spreading continual meridian day, far and wide through the regions of etherial space. Passing swiftly onward through this flood of day, the songs of heaven begin to burst upon your ears, and voices of celestial sweetness, yet loud as the sound of many waters and of mighty thunderings, are heard exclaiming, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever. A moment more, and you have passed the gates; you are in the midst of the city, you are before the eternal throne, you are in the immediate presence of God, and all his glories are blazing around you like a consuming fire. Flesh and blood cannot support it; your bodies dissolve into their original dust, but your immortal souls remain, and stand naked spirits before the great Father of spirits. Nor, in losing their tenements of clay, have they lost the powers of perception. No: they are now all eye, all ear, nor can you close the eyelids of the soul, to shut out, for a moment, the dazzling, overpowering splendors, which surround you, and which appear like light condensed, like glory which may be felt. You see, indeed, no form or shape; and yet your whole souls perceive, with intuitive clearness and certainty, the immediate, awe-inspiring presence of Jehovah. You see no counte-

nance; and yet you feel as if a countenance of awful majesty, in which all the perfections of divinity shone forth, were beaming upon you wherever you turn. You see no eye; and yet a piercing, heart-searching eye, an eye of omniscient purity, every glance of which goes through your souls like a flash of lightning, seems to look upon you from every point of surrounding space. You feel as if enveloped in an atmosphere, or plunged in an ocean of existence, intelligence, perfection and glory; an ocean, of which your laboring minds can take in only a drop; an ocean, the depth of which you cannot fathom, and the breadth of which you can never fully explore. But while you feel utterly unable to comprehend this infinite Being, your views of him, so far as they extend, are perfectly clear and distinct. You have the most vivid perceptions, the most deeply graven impressions, of an infinite, eternal, spotless mind, in which the images of all things, past, present, and to come, are most harmoniously seen, arranged in the most perfect order, and defined with the nicest accuracy: of a mind, which wills with infinite ease, but whose volitions are attended by a power omnipotent and irresistible, and which sows worlds, suns and systems through the fields of space with far more facility, than the husbandman scatters his seed upon the earth;—of a mind, whence have flowed all the streams, which ever watered any part of the universe with life, intelligence, holiness, or happiness, and which is still full, overflowing and inexhausti-

ble. You perceive also, with equal clearness and certainty, that this infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise, all-creating mind is perfectly and essentially holy, a pure flame of holiness, and that, as such, he regards sin with unutterable, irreconcilable detestation and abhorrence. With a voice, which reverberates through the wide expanse of his dominions, you hear him saying, as the Sovereign and Legislator of the universe, Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy. And you see his throne surrounded, you see heaven filled by those only, who perfectly obey this command. You see thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of angels and archangels, pure, exalted, glorious intelligences, who reflect his perfect image, burn like flames of fire with zeal for his glory, and seem to be so many concentrations of wisdom, knowledge, holiness and love; a fit retinue for the thrice holy Lord of hosts, whose holiness and all-filling glory they unceasingly proclaim.

And now, my hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colors; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude, and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the whiteness of unsullied purity, and the splendors of uncreated glory; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot, and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round

you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God, in whose presence you are, is the Being, who forbids sin, the Being, of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed. Keeping this in mind, let us,

I. Bring forward what the Psalmist, in our text, calls *our iniquities*, that is, our more gross and open sins, and see how they appear in the light of God's countenance. Have any of you been guilty of impious, profane, passionate, or indecent, corrupting language? How does such language sound in heaven? in the ears of angels, in the ears of that God, who gave us our tongues for noble purposes? Bring forward all the language of this kind which you have ever uttered; see it written, as in a book; and, while you read it, remember that the eye of God is reading it at the same time. Then say, Is this fit language for an immortal being to utter? Is this fit language for God to hear? Especially, let every one inquire, whether he has ever violated the third commandment, by using the name of God in a profane or irreverent manner. If he has, let him bring forward his transgressions of this kind, and see how they appear in the light of God's presence. Sinner, this is the Being, whose adorable name thou hast profaned, and who, bending upon thee a look of awful displeasure, says, I will not hold him guiltless, that taketh my name in vain. O, what an aspect of shocking, heaven-daring impiety, does this sin assume, when

viewed in this situation!—Have any of you been guilty of uttering what is untrue? If so, bring forward all the falsehoods, all the deceitful expressions, which you have ever uttered, and see how they appear in the presence of the God of truth; of that God, who has declared, that he abhors a lying tongue, and that all liars shall have their portion in the burning lake. O, what is it to stand convicted of falsehood, before such a God as this!—Have any of you been guilty, either at home, or in foreign countries, of perjury, or false swearing? If so, you may here see the awful Being, whom you mocked, by calling him to witness the truth of a known, deliberate lie. And how, think you, such conduct appears in his eyes? How does it now appear in your own? When you took that false oath; when you said, so may God help me, as I speak the truth, you did, in effect, utter a prayer, that his vengeance might fall upon you, if what you swore was untrue. And will not God take you at your word? Will not that vengeance, which you imprecated, fall upon you? O, be assured that it will, unless deep, timely repentance and faith in Christ prevent. Nor is the guilt of those, who share the gain of perjury, and permit such as are employed by them to make use of it, much less black and aggravated in the estimation of him, whose judgment is according to truth.

Have any of you transgressed the command, which says, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy? Such transgressions, I am aware, appear

very trivial on earth; but do they appear so to him who gave this command? Do they appear so in heaven, where an everlasting Sabbath is observed? Let those, who have been guilty of such transgressions, hear a voice from the glory around them, saying, I, to whom you are indebted for all your time, allowed you six days for the performance of your necessary labors, and reserved but one for myself, but one to be employed exclusively in worshipping me, and in working out your own salvation. But even this one day you denied me; when spent in my service, you considered it as a weariness, and therefore employed it, either wholly or in part, in serving yourselves; thus proving yourselves to be wholly unqualified and unfit to enjoy an endless Sabbath in my presence.

Have any of you—we must propose the unpleasant question—been guilty of violating the command which forbids adultery, and its kindred vices? If so, bring forward these abominations, and see how they look in heaven, in the presence of the holy angels, in the sight of that thrice Holy God, who has said, I will come near and be a swift witness against the adulterers, and they shall have their portion in the lake of fire.

Have any of you been guilty of fraud, injustice, or dishonesty? Have you in your possession any portion of another's property, without the owner's consent fairly obtained? If so, bring forward your dishonest gains; hold out the hands which are polluted by them, and see how they look in heaven,

in the presence of that God, who has said, Let no man overreach or defraud his brother in any matter; for the Lord is the avenger of all such.

Have any of you been guilty of intemperance? If so, let such look at themselves, and see how a drunkard, a rational being, self-degraded to a level with the beasts and wallowing in the mire of his own pollution, appears in heaven, in the society of pure angelic spirits, in the sight of that God, who endued him with intellectual powers, and thus capacitated him for being raised to an equality with the angels.

While attending to the preceding remarks, probably many, perhaps most of my hearers may have felt as if they were not personally concerned in them, as if they were guilty of none of these gross iniquities. I would indeed hope, that of some of them, at least, none of you are guilty. But these are by no means the only iniquities, of which God takes notice; for our text further informs us, that he has set our *secret* sins, the *sins of our hearts*, in the light of his countenance. Let us then,

II. Bring our hearts into heaven, and there, laying them open to view, see how they will appear in that world of unclouded light, and unsullied purity.

And, O, how do they appear! What a disclosure is made, when, with the dissecting knife of a spiritual anatomist, we lay open the human heart, with all its dark recesses, and intricate windings,

and expose the lurking abominations, which it conceals, not to the light of day, but to the light of heaven! My hearers, even in this sinful world the spectacle which such a disclosure would exhibit could not be borne. The man, whose heart should thus be laid open to public view, would be banished from society; nay, he would himself fly from it, overwhelmed with shame and confusion. Of this every man is sensible, and, therefore, conceals his heart from all eyes with jealous care. Every man is conscious of many thoughts and feelings, which he would be ashamed to express to his most intimate friend. Even those profligate, abandoned wretches, who glory in foaming out their own shame, and whose mouths, like an open sepulchre, breathe out moral contagion, putrefaction, and death, scarcely dare utter to their own equally abandoned associates every thought and feeling, which rises within them. And if this is the fact, if the heart, laid open to view, would appear thus black in this dark, sinful world; who can describe, or conceive of the blackness which it must exhibit, when surrounded by the dazzling whiteness of heaven, and seen in the light of God's presence, the light of his holiness and glory? How do proud, self-exalting thoughts appear, when viewed in the presence of him, before whom all the nations of the earth are less than nothing and vanity? How do self-will, impatience, and discontent with the allotments of Providence appear, when viewed as exercised before the throne of the infinite, eternal,

universal Sovereign? How do angry, envious, revengeful feelings appear in the eyes of the God of love, and in those regions of love, where, since the expulsion of the rebel angels, not one such feeling has ever been exercised? How do wanton, impure thoughts appear—but we cannot pursue the loathsome, sickening enumeration. Surely, if all the evil thoughts and wrong feelings which have passed in countless numbers through either of our hearts, were poured out in heaven, angels would stand aghast at the sight, and all their benevolence would scarcely prevent them from exclaiming in holy indignation, Away with him to the abode of his kindred spirits in the abyss! To the omniscient God alone would the sight not be surprising. He knows, and he alone knows, what is in the heart of man; and what he knows of it he has described in brief, but terribly expressive terms. The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked! Thus our own hearts must appear even to us, if we view them in the light of God's countenance, and recollect, that, in his sight, thoughts and feelings are actions, that a wanton look is adultery, and hatred murder.

III. Having thus viewed our actual sins of heart and life, as they appear in the light of heaven, let us take a similar view of our sins of omission. Should we neglect to do this, we should see but a small part of our sinfulness; for our sins of

omission are by far the most numerous, and by no means the least criminal offences, of which we are guilty. But before we proceed to take this view, allow me to remind you, once more, where you are, and in whose presence you stand. Recollect all which you have heard and seen of God's infinite perfections; of his unapproachable glory, of the offices which he sustains, of the works which he has performed, of the blessings which he has bestowed upon us, upon our fellow creatures. Look at him, once more, as he appears when seen in the light of heaven; as he appears in the eyes of the angels and archangels around you, and then say what he deserves from his creatures. Does he not deserve, can you avoid perceiving that he deserves, all their admiration, love, reverence, confidence, gratitude and obedience? Does he not, O does he not, deserve to be loved, and feared, and served with all the heart and soul and mind and strength? This, you are sensible, is what his law requires of us; and can any requisition be more just and reasonable? Can we refuse to comply with it; can we withhold our affections and services from such a being as this, without incurring great and aggravated guilt? Yet this, my fellow sinners, is the being, from whom we have all withheld our affections and services. Our whole lives present one unbroken series of duties neglected, of favors not acknowledged. And, O, how do they appear, when we review them in the light of God's countenance! When we see before us

our Creator, our Preserver, our Benefactor, our Sovereign, and our heavenly Father; when we see in him, to whom all these titles belong, infinite excellence, perfection, glory and beauty; when we see with what profound veneration, with what raptures of holy, grateful affection, he is regarded and served by all the bright armies of heaven;—and then turn and contemplate our past lives, and reflect how they must appear in his sight, can we refrain from exclaiming with Job, We have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now our eyes see thee; wherefore we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes? I have sinned; what shall I say unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? Must not each of us say with the Psalmist, Innumerable evils have compassed me about; my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me? Nay more, when you see what God is, and how he is worshipped in heaven, and then look at the coldness, the formality, the want of reverence, with which you have often approached him in prayer, and listened to his word, must you not feel conscious, that, should he call you into judgment, you could not answer for one in a thousand of the iniquities, which have stained your holy things, your religious duties?

But the duties, which we owe to God, are not the only duties, which we are required, and which we have neglected, to perform. While his law

requires us to love him with all the heart, it also requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. And this general command virtually includes a great number of subordinate precepts; precepts, which prescribe the duties of the various relations, that subsist between us and our fellow creatures. And how far have we obeyed these precepts? How far have we performed the duties, which God requires of us, as husbands, as wives, as parents, as children, as masters, as servants, as citizens and as members of the human family? When we spread our lives before God, and look at them as they appear in the light of his countenance, can we fail to perceive, that we have, in all these respects, been grossly deficient, that we have left undone many, very many things, which we ought to have done, and that we are far from having discharged the duties of a single relation, which we sustain? O, how much more might we have done, than we actually have done, to promote the temporal and eternal happiness of all, with whom we are connected!

Nor do our sins of omission end here. There is another being, whom we are under infinite obligations to love, and praise, and serve with supreme affection. This being is the Lord Jesus Christ, considered as our Redeemer and Saviour, who has bought us with his own blood. We are required, and sacredly bound to feel, that we are not our own, but his; to prefer him to every earthly object, to rely upon him with implicit confidence,

to live, not to ourselves, but to him, and to honor him even as we honor the Father. Every moment then, in which we neglected to obey these commands, we were guilty of a new sin of omission. Nor have we the smallest excuse for neglecting to obey these commands; for he is most worthy of all which they require. Even the angels, for whom he never died, regard him as worthy to receive every thing, which creatures can give. Much more then may it be expected, that we, for whom he has done and suffered so much, should regard and treat him as worthy. But how grossly have we failed in performing this part of our duty? How must the manner, in which we have treated his beloved Son, appear in the sight of God? How does it appear to us, when we contemplate him as he appears in heaven; when we see the place which he there fills; when we recollect, that in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells, and that to him are unceasingly ascribed wisdom, and strength, and blessing, and honor, and glory, and power?

The subject before us is far from being exhausted, and very far from having had justice done to it; but we must leave it, and hasten to a conclusion. Before we close, however, permit me to ask, whether you cannot now perceive the reason, why your sins appear more numerous and criminal in the sight of God, than they do in your own? Have you seen or heard nothing, which convinces you, that they are far more numerous and aggravated than you had supposed? If so, you have seen

nothing of what has been exhibited; you have, properly speaking, heard nothing, which has been said; you have not seen your sins in the light of God's countenance; for had you seen them in that light, they would have appeared, in some measure, to you, as they appear to God himself. Witness, for instance, the effect, which a view of God's glory produced upon the prophet Isaiah. Though he was an eminently good man, and had probably fewer sins to answer for, than either of us, yet when, in vision, he saw Jehovah seated upon his eternal throne, and heard the surrounding seraphim exclaiming, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,—he cried out in amazement and consternation, Woe is me! for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips. In a similar manner, my hearers, would you have been affected, had you seen even but a glimpse of those glories, which we have vainly attempted to exhibit. Can you not easily conceive, that this would have been the case? Can you not conceive, that, were you really placed in heaven, before the throne of God, with all the light of his glory shining around you, all the majesty of his countenance beaming upon you, every glance of his omniscient eye piercing your hearts,—your sins would appear to you far more black and numerous, than they now do? If so, allow me to remind you, that a day is approaching, in which you will be constrained to see your sins, as they appear in the light of God's countenance. When that day arrives, his eternal

Son, the appointed Judge, will be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with all his Father's glories blazing around him, and all the bright armies of heaven following in his train. Seated on a throne of resplendent whiteness, with a countenance, from the terrors of which the heavens and the earth will flee affrighted, he will summon the whole race of men before him, and there cause their lives to pass in review, expose all their secret sins, lay open the inmost recesses of our hearts; while the flood of pure, celestial light, which pours itself around him, will, by contrast, cause their blackness to appear seven fold more black. Then all disputes respecting the depravity of mankind, and the demerit of sin, will be ended forever. Then no more complaints of the strictness of God's laws, or of the severity of the punishment, which it denounces upon transgressors, will be heard; for every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God. But a conviction of sinfulness and guilt will then come too late; for there is no available repentance beyond the grave. He that is found a sinner at the judgment day, will continue a sinner, and be treated as a sinner, forever. O, then, my hearers, be persuaded now to come to the light, that your deeds may be reproved, and set in order before you; exercise such feelings respecting them, and so judge yourselves, that you may not be condemned of the Lord in that day.

SERMON VI.

MEN TRIED, AND FOUND DEFECTIVE.

DANIEL V. 27.

THOU ART WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES, AND ART FOUND WANTING.

In the preceding part of this chapter we are informed, that Belshazzar, king of Babylon, made a great feast to a thousand of his lords and drank wine before the thousand. And while he tasted the wine, he commanded his servants to bring forth the golden vessels, which were taken out of the house of God at Jerusalem; and he, with his guests, drank wine in them, and praised the gods of gold and silver, of brass and iron, of wood and of stone. But while they were thus insulting the Majesty of heaven and earth, by consuming his bounty upon their lusts, and profaning the vessels of his sanctuary, in the same hour there came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the palace, and the king saw the part of the hand, which wrote. Though he knew not the awful import of the mysterious words thus written, his guilty conscience soon told him, that he had no reason to expect messages of mercy from the invisible world; and therefore his countenance was changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed and his knees smote one against another. Nor were his terrors without foundation; for after the hand

was withdrawn, the words, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, were found written; words, which were thus interpreted by Daniel the prophet—MENE, God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it; TEKEL, thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting; UPHARSIN, thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. The justness of this interpretation was confirmed by the event, for that same night was Belshazzar slain.

My friends, this story affords an instructive, admonitory lesson to us all; for though we have not, like Belshazzar, profaned the consecrated vessels of the Lord, or praised the gods of the heathen, who are vanity and a lie, yet we have, in various ways insulted our Creator and provoked him to jealousy. We have often consumed his bounty upon our lusts; we have perverted those faculties, which ought to have been consecrated to his service; we have loved and served and idolized the world, and the God, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways we have not glorified; and though the displeasure of offended heaven is not now suddenly and openly displayed, as it was in the days of Daniel; though no hand is now sent, to write the sentence of condemnation on the walls of our houses, yet there is still an invisible witness, which continually records our actions; there is still a just and omniscient God, by whom these actions are weighed; it is still true that we shall receive of him a just recompense of reward, according to our works. Our days are already number-

ed and will soon be finished; for God has set bounds to our lives which we cannot pass. Soon shall we be weighed in the balance of eternal truth and justice, and if we are found wanting, we shall be cut in sunder, and have a portion appointed us with hypocrites and unbelievers. And say, my friends, are you all prepared to pass this solemn test? Should the same hand, which wrote the doom of impious Belshazzar on the plaster of the wall of his palace, be now commissioned to write our names, our characters and our doom on the plaster of the walls of this house, are there none here present, whose thoughts would trouble them; none, whose countenances would be changed by conscious guilt; none, over against whose names the damning sentence, *tekel*, would be seen inscribed?

This is a most interesting and important question to all of us; a question, which ought by no means to remain doubtful; a question, which it is, perhaps, as much as our immortal souls are worth, to leave for a single day undecided. And why should it remain undecided? Have we not, in our own hands, the balance in which our actions and characters will one day be weighed? Has not the Judge himself informed us, in the clearest manner, of the rules and maxims by which he will be guided in determining our irrevocable doom? Let us, then, avail ourselves of the information, which he has given us, and resolve, before we leave this house, to know the worst of our situation, and ascertain what sentence we have reason to expect from the

mouth of God. Let us, this evening, anticipate the proceedings of the judgment day, and impartially weigh our characters, hopes and pretensions in the balance of the sanctuary, that we may discover, before discovery will be too late, whether we are prepared to meet our Judge in peace.

I. Let us place in this balance the pretensions and characters of those, who hope for heaven because they were born in a Christian country, are descended from pious parents; and were by them in their infancy given up to God in the ordinance of baptism, and have enjoyed the advantages of a religious education. That there are persons, who build their eternal hopes on this foundation, daily experience but too plainly evinces; and, perhaps, there may be some such in this assembly. If so, we must assure them, that they are building upon the sand, and that they will be found wanting, when weighed at the bar of God. For though the privileges, with which such persons are favored, afford them peculiar advantages for becoming religious; yet they do not render them so, but, on the contrary, unless suitably improved, greatly aggravate their guilt and punishment. To whom much is given, of them will much be required; and those, who are thus early taught their Lord's will, unless they perform it, will be beaten with many stripes. Think not, says John the Baptist to the Jews, who trusted in their religious privileges,—think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; that is, trust not in your descent from that pious patri-

arch, nor to your covenant relation to God; for I say unto you, that God is able, of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham. To the same purpose St. Paul writes to the Philippian Christians. If any man, says he, thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I have more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee. But, he adds, what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

II. Let us bring to the test of the law and the testimony, the characters and hopes of those, who are trusting for salvation to a good natural disposition, and a harmless, inoffensive life. It is possible, that some of you, my friends, may be trusting to these things. You can plead, that your tempers are gentle, conciliating, mild and amiable; that your conduct and deportment are winning and prepossessing; that you are admired and beloved by your friends and acquaintance, and are not conscious of having, in a single instance, wilfully injured your fellow creatures or offended your Creator. But if you can plead nothing more than this, you will most certainly be found wanting in the sight of that God, by whom actions are weighed. He will not be satisfied with a bare negative goodness, if we may be allowed the expression. He will not think it sufficient, that you have abstained from outward offences, or avoided overt acts of sin, while you have failed to perform what he has commanded.

Those who leave undone what they ought to do, will be as certainly, if not as severely punished, as those, who do what they ought not to have done. Not only those vines which produce the grapes of Sodom, and the clusters of Gomorrha, but those also, which do not produce the fruits of holiness, will be cast into the fire; and though you are covered with leaves, and adorned with flowers; though you make a fair and flourishing appearance in the sight of men, yet he must and will consider you as barren and unprofitable, because you are destitute of these fruits; he must condemn you as slothful and unfaithful servants, because you have neglected to improve the talents with which you were entrusted. It was part of the heavy charge brought against the king of Babylon, that he had not glorified the God, in whose hands his life was, and whose were all his ways. To the same charge you must plead guilty, since you have never glorified, nor even sincerely aimed to glorify God. The amiable dispositions in which you trust, do not lead you to seek his glory, or to obey his commands. In fact, they have nothing in them of the nature of true religion; but are merely corporeal instincts, and are often found in perfection among irrational animals. You are, therefore, found wanting. You want the one thing needful; and were our blessed Saviour now on earth, he would say to each of you, as he did to the amiable young ruler, one thing thou lackest. Go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, take up thy cross and follow me.

III. Another class, perhaps, will boldly come forward and say, though these characters are justly considered as deficient, yet we do not fear that we shall be found wanting; for we have something more than mere negative goodness to plead. Instead of misimproving, or abusing our time and talents, we have improved them with diligence and faithfulness. Instead of injuring our fellow creatures, we have endeavored to promote their happiness by every means in our power. We have been sober, temperate, honest, and industrious; have carefully fulfilled all the social and relative duties of life; have provided for the support of our own families, and been kind and liberal to the poor and afflicted. In short, we have been useful members of society, and have faithfully discharged the various duties, which we owed to our parents, our children, our friends, and our country. We do not, indeed, pretend to be perfect, and confess that, in the course of our lives, we have sometimes been induced by strong and sudden temptations to say or do things, which were, perhaps, improper and sinful. But we have always been sorry for these offences, and they are but few and trifling compared with our good actions. We therefore trust, that a merciful God has forgiven them, and are ready to appear cheerfully at his tribunal, whenever he shall think proper to summon us away. Such ever has been and ever will be the language of those, who are ignorant of their own hearts, and of the requirements of God's law; and such

we have reason to fear, is the secret language of some in this assembly. But we must assure you, my friends, that, if you can plead nothing more than this, you will certainly be found wanting at the bar of God, however safe and confident you may feel; nor can you possibly escape, unless the Judge should break his word, and act contrary to his own solemn declarations. He has summed up the law, by which you will be tried in the two great commands which enjoin it upon us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves. Now even though we should allow what we presume none of you will pretend, that you have through life perfectly obeyed this latter command, and loved your neighbor as yourselves; yet you would still be condemned for neglecting to love God with all your hearts. The performance of all the duties, which you owe your fellow creatures, can make no atonement for neglecting the far more important duties, which you owe to your God; for as our Saviour has said, in a similar case, these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone. If, therefore, we should even allow the truth of all your pleas, you would still be found guilty, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, of wanting that perfect love to God, which the divine law inflexibly requires of all, who seek to be justified by its works.

But we cannot allow the truth of these pleas. We cannot allow that any of you have perfectly discharged the duties, which you owe your fellow

creatures. You know, you must know, that you have not loved your neighbors as yourselves, and that, therefore, in this respect also, you will be found wanting. But you will, perhaps, object, that it is impossible for any one to love his neighbor as himself; it is contrary to nature; it is morally impossible; and since God is a merciful being, he certainly will not judge us by this severe law, but will make some allowance for the imperfections and infirmities of his creatures. If such are your hopes, listen to our Saviour and his apostle, and they will vanish at once. Says the apostle, as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many, as have sinned in, or under, the law, shall be judged by the law. But will not the rigor of this law be mitigated? No; for, says the Judge, though heaven and earth should pass away, yet one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments and shall teach men so; the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; that is, shall never enter it; for I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall, in no wise, enter into the kingdom of heaven. Yet the pharisees had, at least, as much righteousness, as any moralist, at the present day. Some of them could say, we are not as other men are, unjust, extortioners, or adulterers. We fast twice in a week, and give tithes of all we possess.

But it is evident, from our Saviour's own declarations, that those who can say nothing more than this, will be found wanting, and never be admitted into the kingdom of God.

IV. Perhaps another class will come forward and say, we allow that those, who trust to their own moral duties for salvation, will be justly condemned; but we have carefully obeyed the commands of the first table; we do not trust to our moral duties, and therefore hope to escape. We have never worshipped false Gods; we have made no graven images; we have never taken God's name in vain, nor do we profane his holy sabbath. On the contrary, we entertain a great degree of veneration and love for God, we worship him daily in our families and closets; we study his word, honor his institutions, and diligently attend to the preaching of the gospel, in season, and out of season.

But permit me to ask,—are you equally careful to perform all the duties, which you owe to your fellow creatures? Does not your whole religion consist in the observance of external forms, prayer, reading and hearing the word? Are you not among the number of forgetful hearers, rather than the doers of the word; and do you not hope, by your religious duties, to atone for your moral deficiencies? Are you not hard and unmerciful in your dealings; peevish, fretful and morose in your families, or indolent in performing the proper duties of the station in which you are placed? Are you not

harsh and severe in censuring the conduct, or condemning the character of your neighbors? Above all, are you not deficient in the great duty of liberality to the poor, and of doing to others, as you would wish that they should do to you? If so, vain are all your religious duties; vain your pretensions of love to God. In vain do you pretend to obey the commands of the first table, while you neglect those of the second; for piety, without morality, is even worse than morality without piety. You will be found guilty of wanting love to man; and, consequently, of being destitute of all true love to God, whatever you may pretend; for, says the apostle, he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And again, whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? And again, if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue but deceiveth his own heart, that man's religion is vain.

V. Perhaps some may be found, who will say, notwithstanding these observations, still our hope remains unshaken; for we have both piety and morality. We not only deal justly and love mercy, as it respects our fellow creatures, but also walk humbly with our God. We do not make the performance of our duties to men an excuse for neglecting our duties to God; nor, on the other hand, do we consider the discharging of our duty

to God as an excuse for neglecting our duties to men; but we carefully attend to both. We keep up the worship of God in our families and closets; we bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; we reverence the sabbath and other institutions of religion, and diligently attend to the word read and preached. In addition to this, we are sober, moral, and exemplary in our conduct; careful to promote the welfare and happiness of our families, and kind to the poor, the sick and distressed. In what respect, then, can we be said to be wanting?

I answer, if you have nothing more than this, you want many things.

You want that new heart, without which no man can see the kingdom of God. You want that faith, without which you must be condemned. You want that repentance, without which you must inevitably perish. You want that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. All these things are every where represented as indispensably necessary to salvation; and yet persons may do every thing which you profess to have done, without either regeneration, faith, repentance or holiness. You can plead nothing more than the pharisee, who went up to the temple, could plead. He discharged his duties to men no less faithfully than you profess to have done; for he was not unjust, nor an extortioner, nor an adulterer; and he gave the tenth part of his goods to the poor. In addition to this, he also attended to the duties, which he owed to

God. He went to the temple, he prayed, he thanked God, and fasted twice in a week. Yet he was found wanting, and sent away empty. So the young ruler could say respecting the commandments, all these have I kept from my youth up; and St. Paul tells us, that before his conversion, as touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. Yet he afterwards counted all his imaginary righteousness as loss for Christ. But you will, perhaps, ask, if an unregenerate, impenitent sinner can do all these things, what need is there of regeneration and repentance? As well may you ask, if an enemy can perform all the outward acts and services of a friend, what need is there of any real friendship? Would you be satisfied with your children, if they served and obeyed you merely from a selfish fear of punishment, or hope of reward? Would you be pleased with any of their attempts to promote your happiness, if you knew that a wish to obtain a portion of your estates was the only motive and governing principle of their conduct? But the slightest self-examination must convince those of you, whom we are now addressing, that you are actuated merely by selfish motives in all the religious and moral duties which you perform. You are not sweetly drawn by the gentle, but powerful influence of love, to obey your Father in heaven. You do not serve him merely for the pleasure of serving him. You serve him as a master, and not as a father. You are actuated either by fear of his displeasure, by a

desire of obtaining a share of the heavenly inheritance, or a wish to be freed from a burden of guilt which oppresses you. Self-interest, therefore, is really the god, whom you worship; you serve yourselves and not God, in all that you do; and, therefore, your services are all sins; they are an abomination in his sight; because you want that principle of supreme love to God, which is found only in the renewed soul, and without which it is impossible to please him in the smallest degree. They, who want this, want every thing.

But though we should not insist upon this, though we should allow that all your duties were performed with proper views and motives; yet, still, you would be found wanting. You would be found wanting with respect to the improvement of your time; for how much of this is misspent. How much is daily wasted in unnecessary sleep, in idle conversation, in foolish or useless pursuits, and in unproductive idleness. You would be found wanting in the government of your thoughts; for what an innumerable multitude of vain, trifling and sinful imaginations pass through your minds in the course of a single day? If your fellow creatures were acquainted with every thing that passes in your breasts, would they not consider you as wanting wisdom and goodness? How then must you appear in the sight of God? You would be found wanting in the government of your tongues; for how many foolish, vain, unprofitable words escape from your lips in the course of a day. Yet says

our Saviour, for every idle word that men speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment. In a word, you would be found wanting in every respect; for the law of God requires perfect obedience, in thought, word and deed, and pronounces a curse on every one, who does not thus obey it. It requires that all your time, all your talents, all your possessions, all your thoughts and all your affections should be sincerely consecrated and devoted to God; that whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, should be done to his glory. It is in vain to pretend, that you obey this law more frequently than you transgress it; that your good actions are more numerous than your sins. As well might a thief or a murderer say, I have obeyed the laws of my country for many years, and have only broken them in a few instances, and therefore I ought to be forgiven, since my good actions are more numerous than my crimes. Every one must, at once, be sensible of the folly of this plea. Every one must be sensible, that all laws, human and divine, do, and ought to, require perfect obedience, and to punish every wilful transgression; and that it would be the height of absurdity to make a law which allowed persons to disobey its precepts. If the law of God allows men to sin in the smallest degree, then God has become the patron and protector of sin, and is no longer perfectly holy, just and true. But the law of God does not allow men to sin in the smallest degree. It considers him, who offends in one

point, as guilty of all, and condemns him accordingly. It considers imperfect obedience as no obedience; and therefore every one, who has at any time transgressed in thought, word, or deed: every one, who cannot produce a perfect righteousness, will be found wanting, when weighed in this impartial balance.

But you will say, if this be the case, then all will be found wanting; for the scriptures assure us, that there is not a just man on earth, who doeth good and sinneth not. True, my friends, by the law of God we are all found wanting. We have all sinned, and the whole world has become guilty before God. We are all children of wrath, and are already under condemnation. Do you ask, who then will be saved? who will not be found wanting? I answer, those and those only, who can bring and place in the balance the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a perfect righteousness, without spot or blemish. He perfectly obeyed the whole law. He loved God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself; and he is declared to be the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. That is, he fulfils, or obeys the law in their behalf. Believers are united to Christ by faith in such a manner, that they are one with him in the sight of God, and what he has done is considered as having been done by them; and hence they are said to be complete, or perfect in him, and he is made of God unto them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemp-

tion. Hence, believers, though they have neither wisdom, strength, nor righteousness of their own, are wise in Christ's wisdom, strong in his strength, and righteous in his righteousness; and, therefore, when weighed in the balance they shall not be found wanting. There is no condemnation to them, that are in Christ Jesus. But all, who are not united to Christ by faith, will be found wanting; all their righteousness will be proved light as nothing and vanity, and they will share in the doom of impious Belshazzar.

But here an important question arises: How may an interest in the righteousness of Christ be obtained? I answer,—it cannot be purchased, for it is infinitely above all price, nor will he sell his favors. It cannot be merited; for the best merit nothing, but destruction. It must come as a free gift. But to whom will it be given? I answer, it is freely and unconditionally offered to all, who will accept it by faith. None, however, will ever accept it but those, who see that they have no righteousness of their own to plead. None will accept it but those, who are truly convinced, that they have never performed a good action, uttered a good word, or exercised one good affection. Hence our Saviour informs us, that publicans and harlots, the very refuse of society, will sooner enter the kingdom of heaven, than those, who, like the pharisees, trust in themselves that they are righteous. Hence also we find that the promises of the gospel are ever made to the poor in spirit,

to the self-condemned sinner, to the mourners for sin, and to the penitent and contrite heart. Such characters see and feel that they have nothing of their own to plead; nothing which they dare place in the balance. They see, as did the apostle, that in them there dwells no good thing; they see that they are wholly unworthy of God's favor, and deserve nothing but death at his hands; they see that, if they ever are saved, they must be saved by free, sovereign grace. Hence they are willing to throw themselves at Christ's feet, and resign themselves entirely to his disposal. They are willing to receive him by faith, as he is freely offered in the gospel, and to depend on his righteousness, atonement, and intercession alone for salvation. But never will the self-righteous sinner do this; never will he submit to be saved in this humbling way. He may indeed be willing that Christ should supply the deficiences of his own imaginary righteousness, and atone for the few trifling sins which he has committed; but he is resolved to have at least part of the glory of his salvation; he will not depend on Christ alone; and therefore in reality does not depend upon him at all, nor will he receive any benefit from him; for our Saviour will have no partners in this work. He will save us alone, or leave us to perish. He will have all the glory, or we never shall join in the song of the redeemed.

Thus have I endeavored, in a plain, simple, unadorned manner, to set before you the sentence

which you have reason to expect at the judgment day, and the manner in which you may escape the fate of those, who will be weighed in the balance and be found wanting. I have avoided every thing which might tend only to amuse, or to render the subject obscure, and have only sought to render it intelligible to persons of every description. And now permit me to ask, what is the result? Will you go to the judgment seat in your own righteousness, or in that of Christ? If you are still determined to depend on yourselves, or on the mercy of God out of Christ, I cannot help it. I would only remind you of what God has said; Cursed be the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. Behold, all ye, that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks, walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled; this shall ye have at my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow. But if there are any of you, who begin to fear, that you shall be found wanting on that awful occasion; any, who feel that they are poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked, let them comply with the gracious counsel and invitation of Christ, and receive of him, a complete and perfect righteousness, without money and without price. He requires of you no other worthiness than a heart felt conviction, that you are utterly unworthy. He requires no other goodness, than a sincere acknowledgment, that you have in you no good thing. He requires nothing

else of you, in order to salvation, but a readiness to be saved in his own way and upon his own terms. Be not then discouraged to find that you are the chief of sinners; that you have no goodness, no worthiness, no righteousness of your own to plead. Did you possess any of these, he would not receive you; for he came to save, not the worthy, but the unworthy; not the righteous, but the sinful; not those, who feel able to save themselves, but those, who feel utterly lost and undone without him. So long as you imagine, that you have any good qualities to recommend you to his favor, you are separated from him by an impassable gulf; for sooner may a camel pass through the eye of a needle, than one who is rich in his own opinion enter the kingdom of God.

SERMON VII.

OUR SINS INFINITE IN NUMBER AND ENORMITY.

JOB XXII. 5.

IS NOT THY WICKEDNESS GREAT? AND THINE INIQUITIES INFINITE?

THIS question was addressed by Eliphaz to Job. He was led to ask it by a suspicion, that Job was a hypocrite. He had imbibed the erroneous opinion, that great temporal calamities are inflicted on none, except the wicked. Hence he inferred from the unprecedented afflictions of Job, that, notwithstanding all his professions and fair appearances of piety, he was a wicked man. He therefore endeavored to convince him that this was his character, and that he had been deceived respecting himself. With this view he addressed him in the language of our text: Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite? Had Job really been what Eliphaz erroneously supposed him to be, this would have been a very proper question, and the charge, which it implies, would have been strictly just. It is, therefore, still a proper question to be proposed to all, who are ignorant of themselves. Indeed, it may, without impropriety, be addressed to every child of Adam; since there is not an individual among them, who, if he answer it truly, must not answer it in the affirmative. To establish this truth—that the sins of men are infinite in number and enormity—is my present design.

In prosecuting this design it becomes necessary to show, as clearly as possible, what meaning is attached to the terms, sin, and wickedness, in the Word of God: I say, in the Word of God; for it is too evident to require proof, that, by these terms, men usually mean something very different from what is meant by the inspired writers. The word, sin, for instance, is considered by many as synonymous with crime; and by crime they mean the violation of some human law, or of the common rules of morality and honesty. Hence they conclude, that, if a man obeys the laws of his country, and lives a sober, moral life, he has few, if any, sins to answer for. A similar meaning they attach to the term, wicked. By a wicked man, they suppose, is intended, a man openly and grossly immoral, impious, or profane; one who treats religion with avowed disrespect, or who denies the divine authority of revelation. But very different is the meaning, which the inspired writers attach to these terms. By wicked men, they mean all who are not righteous; all, who do not repent and believe the gospel, however correct their external conduct may be; and, by sin, they mean a violation of the divine law, which requires us to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbor as ourselves; for, says the apostle, sin is a transgression of, or a deviation from, the law. This law branches out into various and numerous precepts, prescribing, with great minuteness, our duties towards all the beings, with whom we are connected, and

the dispositions, which are to be exercised in every situation and relation of life; and the violation and disregard of any of these precepts, is a sin. The gospel, also, has its precepts, as well as the law. It requires repentance, faith and obedience; and neglecting to obey these precepts, is represented as sinful in the highest degree. In a word, when we do not perfectly obey all God's commands, in feeling, thought, word, and action, we sin. When we do not feel, and think, and speak, and act, as he requires, we are guilty of what are denominated sins of omission. When we feel, think, or speak, or act, in such a manner as he forbids, we are guilty of the sin of commission. These general remarks will be sufficient to convince every one, who knows any thing of God, of himself, or of the divine law, that his sins are exceedingly numerous. But since most men are unacquainted with all these subjects, and, especially, with the nature, strictness, and extent of God's law, it will be necessary, in order to produce conviction, to be more particular. And since the heart is represented as the fountain, whence all evil flows; the tree which gives its own character to all the fruit produced by it, let us begin with that, and consider,

1. The sin of our hearts; or, in other words, of our dispositions and feelings. The sins of this class alone, of which the best man on earth is guilty, are innumerable. They form by far the heaviest part of the charge, which will be brought against every impenitent sinner at the judgment

day. Yet most men think nothing of them. They seem to imagine, that, if the outside be clean, the feelings and dispositions of the heart are of little consequence. But God thinks very differently; and a moment's reflection will convince us, that a being, who commits no outward sins, may, notwithstanding, be the chief of sinners. Such, for instance, are the evil spirits. None will deny, that they are sinful in the highest degree. But they have no hands, to act; no tongue, to speak. All their sins are inward sins; sins of the heart. It is obvious then, that persons may be the greatest sinners in the universe, without being guilty of one outward sin. The law of God, and the gospel of Christ, teach the same truth. What they principally require, is right feelings and dispositions. What they chiefly forbid and condemn, is, feelings and dispositions, that are wrong. For instance, love is an affection; repentance is an affection; faith is a feeling; humility, a feeling; hope, patience, resignation, and contentment, are feelings. Yet all these are required of us as indispensable duties. On the other hand, unbelief is a feeling; selfishness, impenitence, pride, love of the world, covetousness, envy, anger, hatred, and revenge, are feelings. Yet all these things are forbidden as the worst of sins; sins, for which those, who indulge them, will be condemned. It is evident then, that, if we wish to know the number of our sins, we must look first, and chiefly, at the feelings and dispositions of our hearts. And

if we do thus look at them, we shall be convinced, in a moment, that our sins are numberless. Every moment of our waking existence, in which we do not love God with all our hearts, we sin; for this constant and perfect love to God his law requires. Every moment, in which we do not love our neighbor as ourselves, we sin; for this also we are commanded to do. Every moment, in which we do not exercise repentance, we sin; for repentance is one of the first duties required of us. Every moment, in which we do not exercise faith in Christ, we sin; for the constant exercise of faith the gospel everywhere requires. When we do not set our affections on things above, we sin; for on these we are required to place them. When we are not constantly influenced by the fear of God, we sin; for we are commanded to be in the fear of the Lord all the day long. When we do not rejoice in God, we sin; for the precept is, Rejoice in the Lord always. When we are not properly affected by the contents of God's word, we sin; for this want of feeling indicates hardness of heart, one of the worst of sins. When we do not forgive and love our enemies, we sin; for this Christ requires of us. In a word, whenever our hearts are not in a perfectly holy frame, we are sinning; for God's language is, Be ye holy, for I am holy; be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect. And if we thus sin, when we do not exercise right feelings, much more do we sin, when we exercise those, that are wrong. When we are dissatisfied with any part

of God's word, or with any of his providential dispensations; when we feel a disposition to murmur at our situation, at our disappointments and afflictions, at the weather, or the seasons, we sin; for these are the heart risings of rebellion against God, and they render it impossible for us to say sincerely, Thy will be done. When we hate any one, we sin; for he, that hateth his brother, is a murderer. When we feel a revengeful, or unforgiving temper, we sin; for if we forgive not our enemies, God will not forgive us. When we secretly rejoice in the calamities of others, we sin; for he, that is glad at calamities, shall not go unpunished; and God is said to be displeased with those, who rejoice when their enemy falls. When we envy such as are above us, we sin; for envyings are mentioned among the sinful works of the flesh. When we covet any thing, that is our neighbor's, we sin; for this is expressly forbidden by the tenth commandment. When we love the world, we sin; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.—But I forbear to enlarge; for who, that knows any thing of himself, will deny, that the wickedness of his heart is great, and its iniquities numberless?

2. Let us, in the next place, consider the sinfulness of our thoughts. The thoughts are the offspring of the mind, as the feelings are of the heart; and that they may be sinful, the scriptures plainly teach. The wise man declares foolish thoughts to be sinful Our Saviour classes evil thoughts with

thefts, murders, and adulteries. O Jerusalem, says Jehovah, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee? Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination. Hear, O earth, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts. Even men's characters are determined by their thoughts and purposes; for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. These passages are more than sufficient to prove, that there may be much sin committed in thought. And if vain, foolish thoughts are sinful, who, who, my hearers, can enumerate his sins? Who can even number the sins of this kind, of which he is guilty in a single day? And many of these thoughts are rendered peculiarly sinful by being indulged in the house of God, during the hours set apart for devotion, when, if ever, the mind ought to be solemn and collected. But it is here impossible to descend to particulars. We must leave every one to reflect, as he pleases, on the atheistical thoughts, the impious and profane thoughts, the impure, covetous, vain, foolish, and absurd thoughts, which have passed through his mind, and been entertained there. And while you reflect on this, remember, that thoughts are the language of disembodied spirits; that thoughts are words in the ear of God; and that our guilt, in his sight, is no less great than if we had actually given utterance to every thought, which has lodged in our minds. Agreeably, we find our Saviour

answering the *thoughts* of those around him, just as he would if they had expressed them in words; and, in many passages, God charges sinners with saying, what, it appears, they only thought. In the ear of Jehovah, then, our thoughts have a tongue; and what he hears them say, we may learn from the inspired declaration. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil continually. And surely, no man, who believes this declaration, none, who believes, that thoughts are words in the ear of Jehovah, can doubt that his wickedness is great, and his iniquities numberless.

3. From sins of thought, let us, next, proceed to those of the tongue. From what has been said of our feelings and thoughts, it is evident, that this class of sins also must be exceedingly numerous; for it is out of the abundance of the heart, that the mouth speaketh. If then sin prevails in the heart, it will flow out through the lips. That it does so, is but too obvious. Not to insist on the falsehoods, the slanders, the profane, impious, and indecent expressions, which are daily uttered by many persons, it may be sufficient to remind you, that of every *idle* word, which men speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment. Every idle word then is a sin. But what are idle words? I answer, all that are not necessary, and which do not tend to produce good effects. God's precepts are, Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying. Let your speech be always with grace, that

it may minister grace unto the hearers. Let not foolish talking or jesting, which are not becoming, be once named among you; but rather giving of thanks. These rules, perhaps, will be considered by some as too strict; but, my friends, they are the rules, which God prescribes in his word; they are the rules, by which we must be tried hereafter. And every word, which does not comport with them, is an idle word; and, consequently, sinful. How innumerable, then, are the sins of the tongue! How large a portion of all the words, which we utter, are, at best, but idle words, to say nothing of those which are obviously sinful! Well might the wise man say, that in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. I shall only add, that whenever we speak of others as we should not wish them to speak of us, we sin against the law of love, and violate our Saviour's golden rule, Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even the same to them. Happy is the man, who can truly say, that, in this respect alone, his transgressions are not numberless.

4. Let us now consider our sinful actions. And here, my friends, we shall not speak of what the world call sins. We shall say nothing of thefts, frauds, injuries, intemperance, and debauchery. If there are any among my hearers, who are not free from these gross enormities, I must leave the task of reproving them to their own consciences. Our concern is principally with those sinful actions, which are by most men thought innocent; and for

which, therefore, conscience seldom, if ever, reproves them. To begin with what have been called sins of omission: Withhold not good from him, to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. For to him, that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. From these passages it appears, that, whenever men have an opportunity to do good, either to the bodies or souls of men, or of doing any good work for the glory of God, and neglect to improve it, they sin. Of how many sins, then, are we guilty! How many thousands of opportunities for doing good have we suffered to pass unimproved! How much good has been done by many of our fellow creatures, with no greater means, than we have enjoyed! Is not the charge, which was brought against the proud king of Babylon, applicable to many of us? We have failed to glorify the God, in whose hand our breath is. Prayer and praise glorify God. But these duties we have all neglected during a considerable part of our lives; and many of us are still neglecting them. We are commanded, whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God. These precepts apply to our words, as well as to our actions; and they prove, that every word, which we have not spoken, every action, which we have not performed, with a view to promote the glory of God, and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a sin. Hence it follows, that all the words and actions of unrenewed men are sinful; for they never do any thing, either to the

glory of God, or in the name of Christ. Agreeably, we are told, that the ploughing of the wicked is sin; that the prayer, and the sacrifice of the wicked, are an abomination; and that they, who are in the flesh, that is, in an impenitent, unconverted state, cannot please God; for without faith it is impossible to please him. We do not mean, that all the words and actions of unrenewed men are outwardly wrong, or sinful; but they all proceed from wrong motives, and are not accompanied by right feelings; they are not performed with that temper and disposition, which God requires, and are, therefore, sinful by defect. They are like a body without a soul; the heart, at which God principally looks, and which he requires, is unholy; and, therefore, the actions are the same. This is the import of our Saviour's comparison; the tree is corrupt, and, therefore, the fruit is not good; for a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. To bring all that need be said on this subject to a point;—every feeling, thought, word, and action, which is not, in all respects, as it ought to be, or as God requires it to be, is sinful: but no feeling, thought, word, or action of an impenitent sinner, is, in all respects, what God requires it to be; therefore, every feeling, thought, word, and action of a sinner is sinful. If then men's feelings, thoughts, words, actions, are numberless, so are their sins.

I am aware, my hearers, that this conclusion will startle, and, perhaps, offend some of you; but if

we follow the scriptures, I see not that we can come to a different conclusion. I only ask to be judged, or rather ask you to judge yourselves, by this rule. If you can prove, by fair appeal to scripture, that any part of your temper and conduct has been perfectly right, perfectly agreeable to God's law, I will acknowledge, that my conclusion is wrong. I will only add, that the scriptures assert, in plain terms, that the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, that the way of the wicked is an abomination to him; that every work of their hands, and all they offer, is unclean. If we believe these assertions, we must acknowledge, that our wickedness is great, and our iniquities infinite,—absolutely numberless.

II. It is further necessary to show, that our sins are infinite, not only in number, but in criminality; that every sin is, in fact, infinitely evil, and deserving of infinite punishment. It is so,

1. Because it is committed against an infinite being, against God, a being infinitely powerful, wise, holy, just and good. The criminality of any offence is in proportion to the excellence and greatness of the person, against whom it is committed. For instance, it is wrong for a child to strike his brother. Should the same child strike his father, it would be incomparably more so. Were his father a king, possessed of every good quality, the act would be still more criminal. But God is our heavenly Father, the universal King, infinitely exalted above every human parent, above every

earthly monarch; possessed, in an infinite degree, of every perfection, which can entitle him to the perfect love, confidence, and obedience of his creatures. He is also the author and preserver of the very powers and faculties, which we employ in sinning against him, and he has conferred on us innumerable favors. Of course, we are under infinite obligations to love and obey him; and, therefore, to violate these obligations, and sin against such a being, must be an infinite evil.

Again—that every sin is infinitely evil and criminal, is evident from the fact, that it is a violation of an infinitely perfect law. It will readily be allowed, that, to violate a good law, is a greater evil, than to violate a law, the goodness of which is doubtful. It will also be allowed, that, if there were any law made by human governments, on obedience to which the honor, the welfare, and even the existence of a nation depended,—to violate that law, would be the greatest crime, which a subject could commit. Now the law of God is perfectly holy, just, and good. If it were universally obeyed, universal and endless happiness would be the consequence. But disobedience to this law tends to produce universal and endless misery. Take away the law and the authority of God; there would be no right, but that of the strongest; violence, discord, and confusion would fill the universe; sin and misery would overspread the earth, would ascend to heaven, subvert the throne of Jehovah, and compel him to live in the midst of a

mad, infuriated mob, the members of which were continually insulting him, and injuring each other. Now every violation of God's law tends to produce this effect.

Farther—every sin is an infinite evil, because it tends to produce infinite mischief. Let us trace this tendency. Suppose all the universe to be holy and happy. A thought or feeling tending to produce sin, rises in the breast of some one creature. This thought or feeling is indulged. It gains strength by indulgence; gradually extends its influence over the faculties of the mind, enslaves the whole man, and prompts him to disobey God. Now did it proceed no further, it would still be an infinite evil, for it has depraved and ruined an immortal being, a being, who, but for sin, would have been eternally happy; but who must, in consequence of sin, be forever miserable. But it will not stop there. The being thus ruined by sin, will become a tempter, and seduce his fellow beings, and they, in turn, will tempt others; and, unless God prevent, the infection will spread through the created universe, transforming holy beings into devils, and all worlds into hell! Such, my hearers, is the tendency of sin. Do any deny it? We appeal to facts. The whole universe was once holy and happy. A thought or feeling tending to produce sin, rose in the breast of Satan. He indulged it, and it ruined him. It transformed him from an archangel into a devil. He tempted other angels, and they became devils. He tempted our

first parents; they complied, sinned, and became the parents of a sinful race. Thus all the sin and all the misery in the universe, all on earth and all in hell, may be traced back to one sinful thought or feeling entertained, at first, in a single breast; and this sin and misery would be far greater than they are, were it not for the restraining power and grace of God. Such, then, is the tendency of sin, of every sin; and such effects it would produce, did not God prevent. A sinful thought, or feeling, is like a spark of fire. It seems but a little thing, and is easily extinguished; but it has a tendency to consume and destroy; and let it have room and opportunity to exert itself; let it be fed by combustible materials, and fanned by the winds, and it would destroy every thing destructible in the universe. Similar is the tendency of sin; and who, then, will say, that it is not an infinite evil?

Sins derive an infinite malignity from being committed in defiance of motives and obligations infinitely strong. It is evident, that the criminality of any sin is in proportion to the motives and obligations, which opposed its commission. To sin against many and powerful motives, indicates greater depravity, and is, of course, more criminal than to sin against few and feeble motives. Suppose a person is informed, that, if he commits a certain crime, he shall be imprisoned. If, notwithstanding the threatening, he perpetrates the crime, he shows that he loves the crime more than he loves liberty. Again, suppose him to be as-

sured, that, if he commits the crime, he shall be put to death. Should he, after that, commit the crime, it would indicate greater depravity than before. It would show, that he loved the crime more than life. But the word of God threatens sinners with everlasting misery, if they persist in sin; and promises them everlasting happiness, if they will renounce it. I need not tell you, that, what is everlasting, is in one respect infinite, viz. in duration. Here, then, are two infinitely powerful motives presented to the sinner, to deter him from sin—infinite happiness, and infinite misery. Every one then, who persists in sin, notwithstanding these motives, shows, that he loves sin more than everlasting happiness; that he hates holiness more than he dreads everlasting misery. His attachment to sin, and, of course, his depravity and criminality, are therefore boundless, or infinite. From all, that has been said, it appears that our sins are numberless, and that every one of our sins is infinitely evil or criminal. Every one, then, who answers the question in our text with truth, must answer it in the affirmative.

INFERENCES.

1. If our sins are thus infinite in number and criminality, then, of course, they deserve an infinite, or everlasting punishment; such a punishment, as God threatens in his word. There is scarcely any truth, which men are more disposed to deny, than this. They contend, that it cannot

be just for God to punish sins committed during the short period of our residence on earth, with everlasting misery. But let us examine this objection. Do you not all acknowledge, that a murderer may justly be put to death? Yet he might not have been employed more than a single moment in committing that murder. The fact is, in other cases we never think of inquiring how much time was spent in the commission of any crime. We consider only the nature and magnitude of the crime, and its effects upon society. If the crime is great, and its effects highly pernicious, we conclude, at once, that it deserves a severe punishment. Now we have shown, that sin is an infinite evil; that the effects, which it tends to produce, are infinitely mischievous. Of course, it deserves an infinite punishment. And permit me to add, that complaints of the severity of this punishment come with a very ill grace from impenitent sinners; for they will persist in sin, notwithstanding this punishment. It seems then, that, instead of being too severe, it is not sufficiently severe to deter them from sin. If men will now violate God's laws, what would they do, had he annexed to their violation only a temporary punishment?

2. If sin *deserves* an infinite punishment, then it is perfectly right, that God should inflict such a punishment upon sinners. It is no impeachment of his character, no reflection upon his goodness, to say, that he will inflict it. This evidently follows as a necessary consequence from what has

been said; for justice consists in treating every one as he deserves to be treated; and if sinners deserve an endless punishment, then it is perfectly just and right for God to inflict such a punishment upon them.

3. If it is just, that God should inflict such a punishment upon impenitent sinners, then he must inflict it; he is bound by the strongest obligations to inflict it, for he must do what is just and right. And if it is just and right thus to punish impenitent sinners, then it cannot be just and right not to do it. To spare them, would not be treating them as they deserve, and justice consists in treating them according to their deserts. In a word, it is as much an act of injustice to spare the guilty, as it would be to condemn the innocent. This God himself teaches us in his word. He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord. And will the just God do that, which he declares to be an abomination in his sight? The Judge of all the earth must do right.

4. Hence we see why the atonement made by Christ was necessary. Men had all sinned. Their wickedness was great, and their transgressions infinite. Hence they deserved an endless punishment; and God was obliged, in justice, to inflict on them such a punishment, unless some sufficient atonement could be made. As sin, and the punishment due to sin, were infinite; no atonement, which was not infinite in value, could suffice. And

where could such an atonement be found? Men could not make it; for they were already under sentence of death, and had forfeited every thing which they possessed. Yet the atonement must be made by a man; because it was for the benefit of men. The language of the law was, man has sinned, and man must die. In this exigency, the Eternal Word, the Son of God, interposed. He consented to become man, to bear the sins of men, or, in other words, the punishment, which their sins deserved; to stand as the representative of sinners, and suffer the curse of the law in their stead. This he has done. He has thus magnified the law, and made it honorable. He deserves some reward for this wonderful act of benevolence and obedience. A just God is as much bound to reward him, as he is to punish the wicked. But what reward shall he give him? He needs nothing for himself. But there is a reward infinitely valuable in his estimation, infinitely dear to his benevolent heart. It is the pardon and salvation of his people, of every sinner, who confides in his merits and intercession, and submits to be reconciled, through him, to God. This reward was promised him. This reward is given him. God can now be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. None, however, will believe in Jesus, none will apply to him for salvation, but those, who see and feel, that their wickedness is great, and their iniquities infinite. You may see therefore, my friends, why it is, that I have led your attention to this subject. It is not

because I love to dwell upon it. It is not because I, a miserable sinner, take pleasure in accusing and condemning my fellow sinners. But it is because I, a pardoned sinner, a sinner washed from numberless and infinite offences in the atoning blood of Jesus, wish to bring my fellow sinners to that precious fountain, of which I know the efficacy. It is because, as a messenger of the Lord of hosts, I am commanded to cry aloud, and show to the people their transgressions and their sins: and because I am also directed to preach to you the unsearchable riches of Christ. You may easily conceive how precious the Saviour would appear to you, did you feel burdened with the weight of all the sins, with which you are here charged. My friends—penitent sinners, true Christians, do feel thus burdened; they feel that their wickedness is great, and their iniquities numberless. This it is, which leads them to adopt such expressions, as you hear them use in prayer; expressions, which have been used by all the pious before. It is this, which leads them to complain, that they are the chief of sinners, and to cry out with the apostle, O, wretched man, that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Could you feel thus, how would you rejoice to hear of a Saviour! How eagerly fly to his atoning blood! And are there none, who feel thus? none, whose sins God has set in order before their eyes? none, who are ready to cry out, My sins have gone over me as a heavy burden; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not

able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me! Fly, then, to the cross of Christ, in whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace.

SERMON VIII.

THE WICKED, FROM PRIDE, REFUSE TO SEEK GOD.

PSALM X. 4.

THE WICKED, THROUGH THE PRIDE OF HIS COUNTENANCE, WILL NOT SEEK AFTER GOD.

In this psalm we have a full length portrait of a careless, unawakened sinner, drawn by the unerring pencil of truth; and so perfect is the resemblance, that, were it not for the blinding influence of sin, every such sinner would discover in it, as in a glass, his own image. Two of the features, which compose this portrait, are delineated in our text. The first is an unwillingness to seek after God. The second is pride, which causes that unwillingness. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. In discoursing on this passage, we shall endeavor to show—that the wicked will not seek after God—and that it is the pride of their hearts, which prevents them from seeking him. It will be understood, that, by the wicked, we here intend careless, unawakened sinners.

I. The wicked will not seek after God. The expression implies, not only that they do not seek after him, but that they will not. It is the settled, determined purpose of their hearts, not to seek him; and to this purpose they will obstinately and

unalterably adhere, unless their wills are subdued by divine grace. With a view to illustrate and establish this truth, we observe,

1. That the wicked will not seek after the knowledge of God. This the scriptures plainly assert. The wicked say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. It is also evident from the experience of all ages, that no careless, unawakened sinner, ever used any means, or made the smallest endeavors to acquire a knowledge of God. Our Saviour explicitly declares, that, all, who seek, shall find. But the wicked do not find the knowledge of God; therefore they never seek it. They will not study the scriptures with a view to become acquainted with God. It is true, they sometimes read the scriptures; but they read them either in a formal, careless manner, or to quiet the remonstrances of conscience, or to find arguments in favor of some false system of religion, which may encourage them in sinful pursuits, and enable them to indulge delusive hopes of future happiness. They never look into the Bible with a sincere desire to find God there; nor study it with that humble, docile, childlike temper, without which it will ever be studied in vain. And while many thus read the scriptures with improper views, or wrong feelings, many also, there is reason to fear, scarcely read them at all. From week to week, and from year to year, their Bibles lie on the shelf unopened, while they know little more of their contents than of the Koran of Mahomet.

The wicked will not pray for the knowledge of God. It can never be said with truth of a wicked man, behold he prayeth. On the contrary, he invariably casts off fear, and restrains prayer before God. He may, indeed, and, as we have already seen, often does, request God to depart from him and, like the evil spirits in our Saviour's time, he may cry, I beseech thee, torment me not. But never does he sincerely ask for divine instruction. Never does he cry after knowledge, or lift up his voice for understanding. If he did, he would infallibly obtain it; for every one, that asketh, receiveth. Ye have not, says the apostle, because ye ask not.

The wicked will not improve those opportunities for acquiring the knowledge of God, which our public and private religious institutions afford. It is true that many of them attend frequently, perhaps constantly, on the instructions of the sanctuary; but it is equally true, that custom, curiosity, a regard to reputation, or a wish to pass away the time, and not a desire for divine knowledge, induces their attendance. That this is not an uncharitable supposition is apparent from their conduct. Often, while the most solemn and important truths are proclaimed in their hearing, their thoughts, like the fool's eyes, are in the ends of the earth; and they literally hear as though they heard not. If at any time they listen more attentively to the preached word, it is not with a wish to understand, believe and obey it. Their whole

aim in listening often appears to be, to find some real, or apparent contradiction; some plausible excuse for disbelieving or neglecting what they hear. They watch, as the prophet observes of the Jews, to find some iniquity in the speaker. Their minds are full of cavils and objections against the truths delivered; and, no sooner do they leave the house of God, than they forget or banish all that has been said; or remember it only, that they may pervert, misrepresent, and deny it, and thus harden themselves and others in ignorance and sin. Nor is this all. Private religious conversation, and meetings for this purpose, afford opportunities for acquiring the knowledge of God, as favorable, and in some respects, perhaps, more so, than the public instructions of the sanctuary. But these opportunities the wicked will by no means improve. Seldom, if ever, is the instance known of a careless, unawakened sinner visiting a minister of Christ for the purpose of religious conversation, or attending a private religious meeting, unless it were with some improper motive. They can readily and cheerfully attend meetings of a different kind, and engage in conversation on subjects of a different nature, but they avoid places and circles in which religion will probably be introduced, as they would shun a place infected by the plague. We have no fear, that these assertions can, with truth, be contradicted. Scripture, observation, and experience unequivocally testify, that careless,

unawakened sinners will not seek after the knowledge of God.

2. The wicked will not seek after the favor of God. Indeed, it is perfectly natural, that those, who think the knowledge of God not worth pursuing, should scarcely consider his favor as worth seeking. Knowing nothing experimentally of his excellence and perfections, and ignorant of their entire dependance on him for happiness, they cannot, of course, realize, that the favor of God is life, and his loving kindness better than life. Hence they will not seek to obtain it, but prefer almost every thing else to the divine favor; and love the praise of men more than the praise of God. The way to obtain and secure the favor of God is as plainly marked out, and, at least, as easy to be followed by those who are so disposed, as the way to acquire any temporal blessing whatever. God has stated in his word, with the greatest possible clearness, both what will secure and what will forfeit his favor; both what will incur and what will avert his displeasure: Yet all the wicked daily practice those things, which are displeasing to God, and entirely incompatible with the enjoyment of his favor; while, on the contrary, they totally neglect to cultivate those dispositions and perform those actions, which will secure his approbation. In fact, they think, they care, nothing about it. How he shall avert God's displeasure, or obtain his favor, is no part of an unawakened sinner's inquiry or concern. He asks innumerable

other questions, many of which are in the highest degree frivolous and useless; but never is he heard to ask, what must I do to be saved? He pursues other objects, the most trifling objects too; but never is he seen engaged in the ardent pursuit of this. He is exceedingly jealous of his own reputation, and solicitous to acquire the good opinion of his fellow creatures, even of the meanest and most worthless among them, while he proportionably dreads their censures. But the wrath of him, in whom he lives, and moves, and exists, who can in a moment cut short his life, and destroy both soul and body in hell, he does not fear; nor does he consider his highest approbation as a worthy object of desire or pursuit. In the language of inspiration, the wicked cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty; but none saith, where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?

3. The wicked will not seek after the likeness of God. That they do not at all resemble him, is certain, if the scriptures are true. That they do not wish or endeavor to resemble him, is equally evident. There is, indeed, in their view, no reason, why they should. There are but two motives, which can induce any being to imitate another, or to wish to resemble him. The first is a wish to obtain the approbation of the person imitated. The second is admiration of something in his character, and a consequent desire to inscribe it into our own. But the wicked can be influenced by neither of these motives to seek after conformity

to God. They cannot be led to imitate him by a wish to obtain his favor; for this, as we have already seen, they have no desire to obtain. Nor do they discover any thing in his character, which they wish to transcribe into their own; for they have no knowledge of God, no desire to know him, no taste for the beauties of holiness. Christ, we are told, is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Yet they evidently, as the prophet observes, discover in Christ no form or comeliness; and when they see him, he has in their eyes no beauty, that they should desire to resemble him. And as it is with Christ, the image of God, so, of course, it must be with respect to God himself. Since they have no wish to imitate the former; they cannot, they will not seek after conformity with the latter. The truth of this conclusion is evident from their conduct. Though man is naturally an imitative being; and though the wicked imitate many things in the conduct of their fellow creatures; things too, which are, in many respects, foolish, ridiculous, and sinful, yet they never evince the least desire, or make the smallest exertion to imitate the imitable perfections of God. On the contrary, they refuse to be reconciled to him, follow a course directly opposite to his, and daily become, if possible, more and more unlike him.

4. The wicked will not seek after communion with God. That there is such a thing, as the enjoyment of fellowship or communion with God, the

inspired writers most unequivocally assert; and one of them, St. John, informs us, that, to bring those, whom he addressed, to the enjoyment of this privilege, was the principal design of his epistle. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. That this fellowship with God and his Son is a blessed reality, and that it is productive of the purest and most exalted pleasures, all true Christians well know; for they often taste its sweetness, and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But for this joy in God, and the fellowship which produces it, the wicked will not seek; for they do not desire it; they have no conception of it, and while they continue wicked, it is morally impossible, that they should have.

Communion, or even a desire for communion with any being, always presupposes some degree of resemblance to that being, and a participation of the same nature, views and feelings. Irrational animals evidently cannot enjoy communion with men in rational pleasures, because they have no capacity for such pleasures; nor can they even desire to enjoy communion with us, because they have no conception of such a quality as reason, nor of the pleasures which it qualifies us to enjoy. But cause them to resemble us, endue them with reason, and they will, at once, desire and enjoy communion with us in rational pleasures and pur-

suits. For similar reasons wicked men cannot enjoy, or even wish to enjoy, communion with a holy God; for they resemble him as little, as the irrational animals do us; and, as we have already seen, they will not seek to resemble him. As they cannot know spiritual things, because they are spiritually discerned; so they cannot enjoy spiritual pleasures, because they are spiritually enjoyed. Not only have they no relish or capacity for such pleasures; they do not even know that such pleasures exist, nor can they form a conception of them, any more than an irrational animal can conceive of intellectual enjoyments. Of course, they will not seek after communion with God; and while the Christian, who has been made partaker of a divine nature, enjoys the most exquisite felicity in communion with his Maker and Redeemer, praying, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, they roam unsatisfied from creature to creature, still vainly crying, who will shew us any good?

Thus have I endeavored to illustrate and establish the assertion of the Psalmist. I proceed now, as was proposed,

II. To the reason, why the wicked will not seek after God, viz. their pride.—In illustration of this, I observe,

1. That the pride of the wicked is the principal reason, why they will not seek after the knowledge of God. This knowledge it prevents them from seeking in various ways. In the first place, it renders God a disagreeable object of contemplation

to the wicked, and a knowledge of him as undesirable. Pride consists in an unduly exalted opinion of one's self. It is therefore impatient of a rival, hates a superior, and cannot endure a master. In proportion as it prevails in the heart, it makes us wish to see nothing above us, to acknowledge no law but our own wills, to follow no rule but our own inclinations. Thus it led Satan to rebel against his Creator, and our first parents to desire to be as Gods. Since such are the effects of pride, it is evident that nothing can be more painful to a proud heart, than the thoughts of such a being as God; one, who is infinitely powerful, just and holy; who can neither be resisted, deceived, nor deluded; who disposes, according to his own sovereign pleasure, of all creatures and events; and who, in an especial manner, hates pride, and is determined to abase and punish it. Such a being pride can contemplate only with feelings of dread, aversion, and abhorrence. It must look upon him as its natural enemy; the great enemy, whom it has to fear. But the knowledge of God directly tends to bring this infinite, irresistible, irreconcilable enemy full to the view of the proud man. It teaches him, that he has a superior, a master, from whose authority he cannot escape, whose power he cannot resist, and whose will he must obey, or be crushed before him and rendered miserable forever. It shows him what he hates to see, that, in despite of his opposition, God's counsel shall stand, that he will do all his pleasure, and that, in all things,

wherein men deal proudly, God is above them. These truths torture the proud, unhumbled hearts of the wicked; and hence they hate that knowledge of God, which teaches these truths, and will not seek it. On the contrary, they wish to remain ignorant of such a being, and to banish all thoughts of him from their minds. With this view, they neglect, pervert, or explain away those passages of revelation, which describe God's true character, and endeavor to believe, that he is altogether such an one as themselves.

In the second place, the pride of the wicked prevents them from seeking after the knowledge of God, by rendering them unwilling to be taught. Pride is almost as impatient of a teacher, as it is of a master. The proud man is ever vain of his knowledge, and is unwilling to confess, or even to think, that there is any thing of importance, of which he is ignorant, or that any person is capable of giving him instruction. But if he consents to seek after the knowledge of God, he must acknowledge his ignorance, he must submit to be taught, he must, as it were, put himself to school and become as a little child. This his proud heart cannot brook; and therefore he will not seek the knowledge of God.

In the third place, pride renders the wicked unwilling to use the means, by which alone the knowledge of God can be acquired. For instance, it renders them unwilling to study the scriptures in a proper manner. Every thing, which the Bible

reveals, is suited to mortify pride; for in dictating it God had purposed in his heart to stain the pride of all human glory. The description, which it gives, of the desperately sinful, guilty, and ruined condition of mankind; of our entire dependance on the sovereign grace of God; the mysterious, humbling doctrines and self-denying precepts, which it inculcates; the self-condemning spirit, which it requires, and the self-abasing way of salvation, which it reveals, render it exceedingly disagreeable to the taste of the proud, wicked man. In addition to this, it commands him to renounce his proud dependance on his own understanding, to sit with a teachable, childlike temper at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him, who was meek and lowly in heart; to believe truths, which he cannot fully comprehend, and which, perhaps, appear unreasonable to his prejudiced, blinded, unhumbled mind. These things the proud man cannot endure, and therefore will not study the scriptures.

Pride also renders the wicked man unwilling to pray. Prayer is an expression of wants and dependance, and a direct acknowledgment of a superior; and in addition to this, prayer for the knowledge of God includes a confession of ignorance, and a request to be taught. But this the proud man abhors. No wonder then, that he will not pray for divine knowledge. No wonder, that, even when he attempts this duty, he forgets its design, and, like the self-righteous pharisee, instead

of soliciting pardon, grace and instruction, proudly thanks God, that he is better than others.

In an equally powerful manner does the pride of the wicked operate in preventing them from improving public and private opportunities for acquiring religious instruction. If the public instructions of the sanctuary coincide, as they ever ought to do, with the contents of God's word, the same pride, which leads the wicked to dislike and neglect the one, will prevent them from believing and obeying the other. And with respect to more private meetings for religious conversation and instruction, an attendance on them is still more offensive to the pride of their hearts. Indeed, since they are too proud to request divine illumination from God, it could scarcely be expected, that they will stoop to receive instruction from man. Even after the wicked man begins to be convinced of his ignorance of God, and of the importance of divine knowledge, he is unwilling to have it known, and is ashamed to confess to his Christian friends, or to the minister of Christ, that he is ignorant of religious truth. Such are the principal ways, in which the pride of the wicked operates to prevent them from seeking the knowledge of God.

2. The pride of the wicked will not allow them to seek after the favor of God. The proud always aim at independence. They wish to believe themselves, and to persuade others, that they are able to render themselves happy, without the assistance of any one. But to seek the favor of God,

implies dependance on him for happiness; it implies imperfection, inferiority. Hence it is easy to see how the pride of the wicked prevents them from seeking the divine favor. The way, in which alone God's favor can be obtained, is, if possible, still more offensive to pride. The very entrance upon the way, is a death-blow to it; for the Gospel casts down imaginations and every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and requires us, if we would enjoy his favor, to bow our stubborn wills to his authority, to mortify our pride, and renounce our vainglorious, self-righteous thoughts and feelings. It tells us, that God resisteth the proud; that every one, who exalteth himself, shall be abased; and that the proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord, while he gives his grace to the lowly, and will dwell in none but the humble and contrite heart. We can, therefore, be at no loss to know why the pride of the wicked will not suffer them to seek the favor of God.

3. Pride renders the wicked unwilling to seek after the likeness of God. Those, who have an exalted opinion of themselves, will not easily be persuaded to imitate others. They will rather expect others to imitate them. Besides, an attempt to imitate others, involves a confession, that they are our superiors; at least, that they excel us in those respects, in which we endeavor to imitate them. But pride hates a superior, and is unwilling to allow that it is excelled by any one.

4. The pride of the wicked renders them unwilling to seek after communion with God. The proud man never wishes to associate with those, who are above him. If he must have superiors, he wishes to be as far from them as possible, that the sight of their superiority may not mortify his pride. Hence the remark of proud Cæsar, when passing through an insignificant village—"I would rather be the first man in this village, than the second in Rome;" a speech, which, though admired by the proud and ambitious, nearly resembles that, which Milton has put into the mouth of Satan, after his fall:

> Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.

This is the genuine language of pride; and therefore the proud man shuns the society of his superiors, and prefers that of his inferiors. He chooses to look down, rather than to look up, because, when he looks down, his pride is flattered by seeing others below him; but when he looks up, it is mortified. Hence he will not look up to God. He chooses rather to hold communion with irrational animals in the gratifications of sense, than to seek for fellowship with the greatest and best of beings, in the pure, exalted, and exquisite pleasures of religion. Thus clearly does it appear, that it is the pride of the wicked, which renders them unwilling to seek after God.

REFLECTIONS.

1. How evident it is from what has been said, that salvation is wholly of grace; and that all the wicked, if left to themselves, will certainly perish! They do not seek after God; they will not seek after him; they are fully determined not to do it; the pride of their hearts supports the resolution, and they will infallibly adhere to it unless divine grace prevents. But if they do not seek God, they will not find him; and if they do not find him, they are undone forever. Their eternal destruction is, therefore, inevitable, unless God, of his mere sovereign, self-moved grace, seeks those, who will not seek him, subdues the pride of their hearts, and makes them willing. This he has done for all, who are saved. This he must do for all, who ever will be saved. Need any thing more be said to prove, that salvation is wholly of grace?

2. How depraved, how infatuated, how unreasonable do the wicked appear! and how evident it is, that, if they perish, they will be the sole authors of their own destruction! God has given them all the powers and faculties necessary to enable them to seek and pursue any object. This is evident, because they do, in fact, seek and obtain many objects. God also commands them to seek his face; assures them, that none shall seek in vain; and, at the same time, warns them, that all, who seek him not, will be miserable forever. But the wicked neglect his warnings, disbelieve his

promises, and pay no attention to his commands. When they hear him saying, Seek ye my face: instead of replying with the Psalmist, Thy face, Lord, will we seek,—their proud hearts obstinately refuse to obey. They pursue the perishing vanities of time and sense through labors, dangers, and death itself; and, wandering far from the way of peace, and neglecting the infinite beauty, the supreme good, the fountain of life and happiness, they madly rush on, with blind impetuosity, into the yawning gulf of destruction. They are, therefore, evidently and incontestably, their own destroyers; and when they shall, hereafter, be sentenced to depart accursed from him, whom they now refuse to seek, should the whole intelligent universe be summoned to inquire what occasioned their fate, they would unite in a verdict of self-murder.

3. How foolish, how absurd, how ruinous, how blindly destructive of its own object, does pride appear! By attempting to soar, it only plunges itself in the mire; and, while endeavoring to erect for itself a throne, it undermines the ground on which it stands, and digs its own grave. It plunged satan from heaven into hell; it banished our first parents from paradise, and it will, in a similar manner, ruin all, who indulge it. It keeps us in ignorance of God, shuts us out from his favor, prevents us from resembling him, deprives us, in this world, of all the honor and happiness, which communion with him would confer; and in the next, unless

previously hated, repented of, and renounced, will bar forever against us the door of heaven, and close upon us the gates of hell. O, then, my friends, beware, above all things, beware of pride. Beware, lest you indulge it imperceptibly; for it is, perhaps, of all sins the most secret, subtle, and insinuating. That you may detect it, remember, that he only, who seeks after God in his appointed way, is humble; and that all, who neglect thus to seek him, are most certainly proud in heart, and, consequently, an abomination unto the Lord.

Lastly—This subject may be applied for the purpose of self-examination. Say, then, my friends, are there none present, who do not seek after God? Are you all seeking after the knowledge of God, by diligently and humbly studying the scriptures, by fervent prayer, and by a conscientious improvement of the public and private opportunities, with which God has favored you? Are you all seeking the favor of God as the one thing needful, avoiding every thing which will tend to displease him, and practising every thing that tends to secure his approbation? Are you seeking conformity with God, aiming to be followers of him as dear children, and desiring to be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect? Is communion with God the grand object of your desires, the principal source of your pleasures, the reward, at which you aim, in the performance of religious duties? If this be the case with all present, you are indeed happy, and the preceding observations have no application to

you. But if there be one person present, who is not thus seeking God, that person is a wicked person, one, who is entirely under the influence of pride, and against whom all the dreadful curses, denounced by inspired writers upon the wicked, are levelled. If there be one such person in this assembly, may God, by his Spirit, single him out, convince him of his wickedness, his pride, his guilt and danger, and bring him, as a trembling inquirer after God, to the feet of Jesus, and, as a humble suppliant for mercy, to the foot of the cross.

SERMON IX.

RECOLLECTIONS OF GOD PAINFUL TO THE WICKED.

PSALM LXXVII. 3.

I REMEMBERED GOD, AND WAS TROUBLED.

God is a being, whom it is impossible to contemplate with indifference. His character is so interesting, our dependance on him is so complete, and his favor is so indispensably necessary to our happiness, that a distinct recollection of him must always excite either pleasing or painful emotions. We must view him with dread and anxiety, or with confidence and joy. Agreeably, we find, that the recollection of God always produced one or the other of these effects upon the mind of the Psalmist. It was usually productive of delight. My soul, says he, shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips; when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. But sometimes the remembrance of God produced on his mind very different effects. An instance of this we have in the psalm before us. My soul refused to be comforted; I remembered God and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed; I am so troubled, that I cannot speak.

The account, which the Psalmist here gives of his experience, naturally leads to some very inter-

esting inquiries and remarks; remarks, which will probably come home to the bosoms and feelings of almost every person present. There is, I presume, scarcely an individual of mature age in this assembly, who cannot say, with reference to some seasons of his life, I remembered God and was troubled. And there are, I trust, not a few present, who can say, my meditations on God in the night watches have been sweet. Now whence arises this difference? Why is the remembrance of God pleasant to some of us, and painful to others? Why is it sometimes pleasant, and at others painful, to the same individual? These are inquiries intimately connected with our happiness; for since it is impossible for any one to banish all recollection of God, and since the period is approaching, when he will be always present to our minds, it is highly necessary for our happiness, that we should be able, at all seasons, to remember him with pleasure.

I. In pursuing these inquiries, it may be necessary, in the first place, briefly to state what we mean by remembering God. We certainly mean something more than a transient recollection of the word, God, or of any other name, by which he is known. A person may hear or mention any of the names of God, many times in a day, without forming any distinct conceptions of his character, or of any part of it. He cannot, in this case, be said to remember God; for, properly speaking, it is only a word, which he remembers. But by remember-

ing God, I mean, as the Psalmist undoubtedly meant, recollecting those ideas, which the term God is used by the inspired writers to signify. When they use the word, they use it to denote an eternal, self-existent, infinitely wise, just, and good Being, who is the Creator and Upholder of all things, who is our Sovereign Lawgiver, and who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will; who is always present with us, who searches our hearts, who approves or disapproves our conduct, who loves holiness and cannot look on sin but with abhorrence, who has power to make us eternally happy or miserable, and who will hereafter exert that power in bestowing endless happiness on some persons, and dooming others to endless woe, according to their respective characters. Whenever a person has these ideas of God in his mind, when he feels convinced for the time, that there is such a being, and that he is what the Scriptures represent him to be, then he remembers God in the sense of the text.

II. The way is now prepared to inquire, why the recollection of such a being should ever be painful; or, in other words, why any of God's creatures should be troubled at the remembrance of him. It may easily be shown, that there is nothing in the divine character or government, which *necessarily* renders the remembrance of God productive of painful emotions. If there were, the remembrance of God would be painful to all his creatures, upon all occasions. But this is not the

case. On the contrary, the remembrance of God is always delightful to holy angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. In fact, the constant presence of God constitutes their heaven. The recollection also of his existence, character, and government, is, usually, though not always, highly pleasing to all good men. Nor is it strange that it should be so. It is always pleasing to an affectionate child, to reflect on the character, wealth, honor and influence of his father. The power, grandeur, and riches of their sovereign, are a source of heart-felt exultation and delight to all loyal subjects. They would consider their habitations as highly honored by his presence, and themselves as still more honored by an admission to his palace. For similar reasons, the affectionate children and loyal subjects of the King of kings can not but exult and rejoice in contemplating the existence, the glories, the favor and the constant presence of their heavenly Father and King. It is and must be pleasing to them, to reflect, that they are the creatures, the subjects of such an infinitely great, wise, and powerful being. The thought, that Jehovah exists and reigns God over all, blessed for ever; that he brings good out of evil, causes the wrath of man to praise him, and makes all things work together for the accomplishment of his wise and just designs, cannot but be exceedingly gratifying and consoling to persons of this description, while they contemplate the dread-

ful prevalence of natural and moral evil in this ruined world.

But if there be nothing in the character or government of God, which renders the remembrance of him *necessarily* painful to his creatures; and especially if the recollection of him be in itself suited to console, delight and animate them, then it follows, that, if any are troubled by the remembrance of God, the cause must exist solely in themselves. My friends, it does so. Nor is it difficult to discover and point out the cause. In one word, it is sin. Nothing but sin can ever render the remembrance of God painful to any of his creatures. None but such as are conscious of sin indulged and guilt contracted, can have reason to say, I remembered God and was troubled. This is evident from facts. The once holy, but now fallen angels, rejoiced in God, till they sinned. Our first parents in paradise contemplated his character and government with unmixed delight, till they transgressed his commands. Good men find a similar pleasure in meditating upon these subjects, when they can view themselves as justified from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ, and when they are conscious of no allowed deviation from the divine law. If our hearts condemn us not, says the apostle, then have we confidence towards God; and the man, who has confidence towards God, cannot be troubled at the remembrance of him. But, on the other hand, if our hearts or consciences condemn us, it is impossible to remember him without being

troubled. It will then be painful to remember, that he is our Creator and Benefactor; for the remembrance will be attended with a consciousness of base ingratitude. It will be painful to think of him as Lawgiver; for such thoughts will remind us, that we have broken his law. It will be painful to think of his holiness; for if he is holy, he must hate our sins, and be angry with us, as sinners:—of his justice and truth; for these perfections make it necessary that he should fulfil his threatenings and punish us for our sins. It will be painful to think of his omniscience; for this perfection makes him acquainted with our most secret offences, and renders it impossible to conceal them from his view:—of his omnipresence; for the constant presence of an invisible witness must be disagreeable to those, who wish to indulge their sinful propensities. It will be painful to think of his power; for it enables him to restrain or destroy, as he pleases;—of his sovereignty; for sinners always hate to see themselves in the hands of a sovereign God:—of his eternity and immutability; for from his possessing these perfections it follows, that he will never alter the threatenings, which he has denounced against sinners, and that he will always live to execute them. It will be painful to think of him as Judge; for we shall feel, that, as sinners, we have no reason to expect a favorable sentence from his lips. It will even be painful to think of the perfect goodness and excellence of his character; for his goodness leaves us without

excuse in rebelling against him, and makes our sins appear exceedingly sinful. Thus it is evident, that the consciousness of sin committed and guilt contracted must render the government, and all the perfections of God, objects of terror and anxiety to the sinner; and, of course, the recollection of them must to him be painful.

Nor is this all. Every sinner loves sin. He places his whole delight in it. The only happiness, with which he is acquainted, consists in gratifying either the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eye, or the pride of life. But all these things are contrary to the will of God. He forbids the sinner to pursue them; he forbids him to indulge or gratify his sinful propensities; he commands him to mortify and destroy them, to deny himself, to take up his cross, follow Christ, and live a religious life, in which sinners can find no pleasure. He not only requires all this, but threatens all, who do not comply, with everlasting punishment. Whenever, therefore, the sinner thinks of God, he thinks of a being, who crosses all his darling inclinations, thwarts all his schemes of happiness, and treads down self, that idol which he loves to worship, and to which he wishes every thing to give way. The sinner, therefore, cannot but look upon God, when he views him in his true character, as his greatest and most irreconcilable enemy. Agreeably, he is represented by the inspired writers as saying in his heart, No God; that is, would there were no God, or that I could escape from or resist his power.

But this, reason and revelation assure him, is impossible. They tell him, that he can neither deceive God, nor fly from him, nor resist him; that he is completely in his power, and that God will dispose of him just as he pleases. This being the case, it is evident, that, whenever he remembers God in the sense of the text, he cannot but be troubled.

It is further evident, that the more clearly they perceive God's character and their own; the more light is thrown into their consciences, the more mercies, privileges, and opportunities they have enjoyed and abused,—so much the more they will be troubled by a remembrance of God. Whenever they contemplate him, they will be thrown into a state of intestine war, of war with themselves. Conscience will rise up in their breasts, and take God's part, and reproach them for disobeying his commands, and abusing his favors. Their understandings will side with conscience, and render its reproaches doubly terrible. On the other hand, all their sinful feelings and propensities will array themselves in opposition to reason and conscience, and attempt to defend and justify themselves. Hence inward struggles and conflicts will arise; the sinner's mind will become like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt; and he can have no rest, until he either becomes cordially reconciled to God, or succeeds in banishing all serious thoughts of him from his breast. As well then may an imprisoned rebel

think of his sovereign, or a condemned criminal of his judge, with pleasure, as an inpenitent sinner remember his offended God, without being troubled.

But it may, perhaps, be objected, that many impenitent sinners appear to remember God, not only without pain, but even with pleasing emotions. I answer, it is not the true God, whom they remember, but an imaginary god, a god of their own creation. Sinners soon find, that it is impossible to think of such a God, as the scriptures describe, without anxiety and alarm. Their carnal minds are full of enmity against such a being. They, therefore, proceed to form a god of their own, one, who will not interrupt, oppose, or alarm them in their sinful pursuits; and such a god they can contemplate without pain, and even with pleasure. Hence we are told, that they think God to be altogether such an one as themselves, and say in their hearts respecting sin, God will not requite it.

It will, perhaps, be further objected, that there are some things in the character and government of God, which are adapted to allay the apprehensions of sinners, and prevent them from being troubled at the remembrance of him; his forbearance, long-suffering, and mercy, for instance, and especially the display, which he has made, of his love in the Gospel of Christ. I answer, it is readily allowed, that these things are suited to encourage and comfort those, who, in the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ, become reconciled

to God, and embrace the offers of mercy. Indeed, were it not for these things, not one of our apostate race could ever contemplate God with any other feelings, than those of terror, remorse, and despair; for we have all sinned, and exposed ourselves to everlasting condemnation. But while the mercy and grace of God, as displayed in the Gospel, are well adapted to comfort the penitent believer, they can evidently afford no rational ground of consolation to impenitent sinners, nor enable them to contemplate him without being troubled. Promises of pardon to the penitent, the believer, the reconciled, are nothing to the impenitent, the unbeliever, the unreconciled rebel, whose heart is still at enmity against God. To such persons the divine character and government still remain no less terrible, than if Christ had not died, and mercy were not offered. Nay, they are, in some respects, more so; for the Gospel has threatenings, as well as the Law, and it denounces on those, who neglect it, a much sorer punishment, than does the Law itself. Those, therefore, who neglect the Gospel, and refuse to repent and be reconciled to God, cannot remember him without being troubled. The same may be said of hypocritical professors, at least, of those, who know or suspect themselves to be such; for to them the thoughts of an all seeing, heart searching Judge, who cannot be deceived, and who will bring every secret thing into judgment, cannot but be exceedingly painful. The presence of a penetrat-

ing master is ever disagreeable to an unfaithful servant.

APPLICATION.

1. This subject, my friends, affords a rule, by which we may try ourselves, and which will assist us much in discovering our real characters; for the moral character of every intelligent creature, corresponds with his habitual views and feelings respecting God. If we never remember him in the sense of the text, or if we think of him unfrequently and with indifference, it is an infallible proof, that our characters are wholly sinful, and our situation most dangerous; for we are expressly told, that all who forget God, shall be turned into hell. If we do not habitually contemplate God's true character and government with heartfelt satisfaction; if we do not rejoice, that the Lord reigns, and that he is just such a being as the scriptures represent him, and that we and all other creatures are in his hands,—it is certain, that we are not reconciled to him, that we still remain under the power of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. If, though we can usually contemplate these objects with delight, we sometimes find the thoughts of them painful, it is a proof, that, at such times, we are in a state of backsliding, from which we ought immediately to return. But whenever we can remember the true character of God, and the truths connected with it, without being troubled, when we can think of appearing in his presence at the

judgment day with a humble, solemn joy; and, especially, when we feel, that, to be with him, to see and praise him, forever and ever, is the very heaven which we desire, then we may be sure, that we are his real children, and that we are in a state of actual preparation for death.

2. From this subject we may learn how wretched is the situation of impenitent sinners; of those, who cannot remember God, without being troubled. That such persons cannot enjoy real happiness even in this life, is too evident to require proof; for the world cannot afford it, and they dare not look up for it to heaven, the only source whence it can be derived. Nay more, that great and glorious being, who alone can communicate happiness, is to them an object of dread, and a cause of anxious apprehension. The waters of life, which convey refreshment and felicity to all holy beings, are to them waters of bitterness; and what ought to be their happiness, constitutes their misery. Hence, whatever calamities and afflictions may overwhelm them, however deeply they may be distressed, and however greatly they may need consolation, they cannot look for it to the God of all consolation; for the remembrance of him would only increase their troubles. Indeed, the remembrance of him is usually most painful to sinners, when they are most severely afflicted; because they justly consider their afflictions as proofs of his displeasure. And if the situation of such persons is wretched in life, how much more so must it be

at death, and in eternity! You will, I presume, allow, that, if there be any such thing as consolation, it must be drawn from the contemplation of God, and of a future state; for it is most certain, that neither this world nor its inhabitants can afford it. But from the contemplation of these objects the dying sinner can derive no consolation. On the contrary, he must, if he thinks of them at all, think of them only with anxiety and dread. If he thinks of God, he can think of him only as a being, whom he has neglected and offended, whose mercies he has abused, and who can view his conduct with no feelings but those of indignation and abhorrence. Every remembrance of him must be accompanied with a recollection of duties neglected, and sins committed, and with fearful apprehensions of his just and eternal displeasure. Which way soever the expiring sinner turns his eye, he can, therefore, discover nothing, which does not add to his wretchedness and despair. If he looks forward, he sees nothing but the dark and gloomy valley of death, through which no friend will accompany him; the burning throne of judgment, to which he is hastening, and eternity, shrouded in blackness and darkness, spreading in boundless extent beyond it. If he looks back, he sees numberless sins following him as accusers to the judgment seat, and threatening there to find him out. If he looks upward, he sees nothing but the frowning eye of a just and angry God, the glories of which search his inmost soul, and wither all his hopes.

If he looks downwards, it is to that bottomless abyss, which he cannot but fear awaits him. He 'turns, and turns, and finds no ray of hope.'

My friends, if such be the death of those, who forget God, what must be their eternity? No sooner do they leave the body, than that holy, just, eternal being, whose every remembrance troubled them, bursts, at once, in all his burning glories, upon their aching sight! And if merely to remember him were painful, what must the sight of him be? Think of a wretch deprived of his eyelids, and condemned to gaze unremittingly at a scorching sun, till the balls of sight were withered and dried up,—and you will have some faint conception of the feelings of a sinful creature doomed to gaze, through eternity, at the, to him, heart withering perfections of that God, who is a consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity.

My sinful hearers, you, to whom the remembrance of God is painful, will you not hear and be convinced? I do not so much ask you to believe the scriptures, as to believe the testimony of your own experience. You cannot but be sensible, that the light of divine truth is painful to you; that the thoughts of God, of death, and judgment, trouble you. Nor can you deny, that you are mortal, that you must soon exchange this world for another. Now if the remembrance of God be painful to you while in health, must it not be far more painful to you, when sickness and death come upon you. If

the mere recollection of God troubles you, must not the sight of him be incomparably more productive of distress? Why, then, will you put away thoughts, which must return, at a dying hour, to overwhelm you? which must be your eternal companions! Why will you put off that preparation for death, which alone can prevent the recollection, and the sight of God from being productive of anguish? and which will convert what is now painful into a source of the purest, of everlasting felicity? Why will you continue in the wretched state of those, who are rendered unhappy by the remembrance of their Creator, of a being, in whose world they live, of whom every thing tends to remind them; a being, who is not far from every one of them, and in whose presence they must dwell forever? How wretched would be the situation of the inhabitants of the ocean, if the element, which surrounds them, and out of which they cannot exist, should become to them a source of misery! And how much more wretched, then, must be the situation of those, who are made miserable by the remembrance, or by the sight of him, in whom they live, and move, and from whom they can never fly! Why then, will you not be persuaded to renounce those sins, which are the only cause, that renders the recollection of God painful, and to embrace those terms of reconciliation, which will render the thoughts, and the presence of God consoling in life, delightful in death, and

productive of ineffable happiness through eternity? This leads us to remark,

3. How great are our obligations to God for the gospel of Christ, the gospel of reconciliation! Were it not for this, the remembrance, and still more the presence of God, would have occasioned nothing but pure, unmingled wretchedness to any human being. Were it not for this, no child of Adam could ever have contemplated God in any other light, than that of an inflexibly holy, just, and offended Judge, all whose perfections demanded his destruction. Were it not for this, there could have been nothing before us, but a certain, fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation. It is only when viewed through that Mediator, whom the gospel reveals, that God can be contemplated by sinful creatures, without dismay and despair. But in and through him God is reconciled. In and through him peace is offered to rebellious men; through him we may all have access by one Spirit unto the Father. O, then, be thankful for the gospel of reconciliation, and show your gratitude, by eagerly embracing the terms of peace, which it proposes. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

4. Is sin alone the cause, which renders the remembrance of God painful? Then let all, who have embraced the terms of reconciliation offered by the gospel, all who desire to remember God without being troubled, beware, above all things,

beware of sin. It is sin, my christian friends, which is the cause of all your sorrows. It is sin alone, which spreads a frown over the smiling face of God; sin, which hides from you the light of his countenance, which prevents you from always contemplating him with pure, unmingled delight and confidence. Swear, then, an eternal war with sin; not only swear, but maintain it. Oppose sin resolutely, crucify it, mortify it in every way, and under all the forms, in which it appears, and it shall not have dominion over you. You shall not have the spirit of bondage again to fear; but the spirit of adoption, whereby ye will cry, Abba, Father.

SERMON X.

SINNERS WILFUL AND PERVERSE.

LUKE VII. 31–35.

AND THE LORD SAID, WHEREUNTO THEN SHALL I LIKEN THE MEN OF THIS GENERATION? AND TO WHAT ARE THEY LIKE? THEY ARE LIKE UNTO CHILDREN SITTING IN THE MARKET-PLACE, AND CALLING ONE TO ANOTHER, AND SAYING, WE HAVE PIPED UNTO YOU, AND YE HAVE NOT DANCED; WE HAVE MOURNED TO YOU, AND YE HAVE NOT WEPT. FOR JOHN THE BAPTIST CAME NEITHER EATING BREAD NOR DRINKING WINE; AND YE SAY, HE HATH A DEVIL. THE SON OF MAN IS COME EATING AND DRINKING; AND YE SAY, BEHOLD A GLUTTONOUS MAN, AND A WINEBIBBER, A FRIEND OF PUBLICANS AND SINNERS! BUT WISDOM IS JUSTIFIED OF ALL HER CHILDREN.

If we ever find infinite wisdom apparently at a loss, it is when she would describe the unreasonableness and perverseness of sinners, or devise proper means to reclaim them. Thus we find her saying to God's ancient people, O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for thy goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. In a similar manner Christ here represents himself as at a loss how to describe the perverseness and obstinacy of his hearers. Whereunto, says he, shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? As it is, however, impossible, that the infinitely wise Saviour should ever be really at a loss, he immediately fixes upon a similitude, which strikingly

illustrated their character and conduct. They are, says he, like children sitting in the market-place, and saying to their fellows, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. To see the force and appositeness of this comparison, it is necessary to recollect the manner, in which weddings and funerals were solemnized among the Jews. At their weddings, a procession was formed, preceded by musicians, playing cheerful tunes, and dancers, who accompanied and kept time to their music. At their funerals also they had mourners, who performed solemn and mournful airs, or uttered cries, lamentations and other expressions of grief. These various ceremonies the Jewish children were accustomed to imitate in their amusements. Sometimes they played cheerful tunes, and rejoiced as at a marriage feast; at others, they uttered mournful sounds, and affected to weep, as at a funeral procession. Sometimes, however, children, who wished to amuse themselves in this manner, found their companions peevish and unwilling to join with them. If they piped and rejoiced, as at a wedding, these ill humored companions would not dance; if, to please them, they changed their strain, and mourned, as at a funeral, they would not weep and lament. Hence they complained, as in our text, that it was impossible to please them, they would neither do one thing nor another. Similar to the temper and conduct of these perverse children was that of the Jews in the Saviour's time, and similar

has been the conduct of sinners ever since. To trace this similarity, is my present design.

I. The companions of these perverse children employed various means to conquer their obstinacy and persuade them to join in their amusements. So God has employed a great variety of means to persuade sinners to embrace the Gospel. He has sent judgments to subdue, and mercies to melt them; arguments to convince, and motives to persuade them; threatenings to terrify, and invitations to allure them. In different parts of his word he has exhibited divine truth in every possible variety of form. In one place it is presented plainly to the mind in the form of doctrines; in another, it is couched under the veil of some instructive and striking parable; in a third, it is presented to us in a garb of types and shadows; in a fourth, it is illustrated by the most beautiful figures; and, in a fifth, exemplified in some well drawn character, or interesting portion of history. In a word, he addresses us, by turns, in language the most plain and simple, the most grand and commanding, the most pointed and energetic, the most sublime and beautiful, the most impressive and affecting, the most pathetic and melting. God and men, this world and the next, time and eternity, death and judgment, heaven and hell,—these rise successively to our view, portrayed in the most vivid colors, and exhibited in various forms, while the whole created universe is put in requisition to furnish images for ths illustration of these awful realities; and the infinite wisdom

of God himself is exerted, if I may so express it, to the utmost, in devising and employing the most suitable means to impress them upon our minds, and cause them to affect our hearts. Thus he has addressed himself, by turns, to our eyes and to our ears, to our understandings and consciences, to our imaginations and to our affections, to our hopes and to our fears; and caused divine truth to seek admission to our minds by every avenue, to try every possible way of access.

Corresponding to these various means, and to the different modes of instruction adopted in his word, are the various gifts and qualifications, with which he furnishes those, who are sent as his ambassadors to men. As he knows the different tastes and dispositions of men, and the modes of address best adapted to convince and persuade them, he endues his messengers with a great diversity of gifts, so that, by one or another of them, every class of hearers may be gratified. He sends some ministers, who are sons of thunder, well qualified to awaken, rouse, and convince the careless; while others, like Barnabas, are sons of consolation, and fitted to comfort the feeble minded and support the weak. Some he furnishes with clear, penetrating minds, and strong reasoning powers, that they may perspicuously state, and ably defend the doctrines of revelation, answer objections, and, by sound arguments, convince the gainsayers. To others he gives warm feelings and lively imaginations, that they may urge divine truth upon the hearts and

consciences of their hearers, in a more forcible, impassioned and impressive manner. On a third class he bestows the faculty of presenting truth to the mind in a mild, insinuating, persuasive way, by which it steals into and melts the heart, descending upon it like the dews of heaven, or silent showers, which water the earth. Thus, how diversified soever are the tastes and dispositions of men, all may, in turn, be gratified, in consequence of the variety of ministerial gifts, which God employs for the conversion of sinners and the edification of his church. Thus the healing medicine of divine truth is presented to the vitiated palates of sinners in every possible variety of form; or to allude to the comparison in our text, thus do different ministers address their hearers in different strains, sometimes endeavoring to allure them to embrace the gospel, by comparing it to a marriage feast; and, at others, attempting to terrify them to fly to it, by bringing into view the solemnities of death, and the awful scenes which follow it.

II. Notwithstanding the different means employed with these perverse children, they would not be prevailed upon to comply with the wishes of their companions. We have piped unto you, say they, but ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, but ye have not lamented. Precisely similar is the conduct of impenitent sinners. Notwithstanding the great variety of means, which God employs to persuade them to embrace the Gospel; and though, as our Saviour teaches us, these

means are no less adapted to produce the effect than a message from the dead, yet still they perversely refuse to comply. Reason with them—they will not be convinced; set motives before them—they will not be persuaded; address their hearts—they will not be affected; appeal to their consciences—they will not feel guilty; attempt to excite their fears—they will not be alarmed; endeavor to allure them to Christ by promises and invitations—they will not come. Beseech them, weep over them, expostulate with them in the most affectionate and pathetic manner; set good and evil, life and death, hell and heaven, judgment and eternity before them in every form—they make light of all, and go their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize. In vain have prophets prophesied; in vain have apostles preached; in vain have angels descended from heaven; in vain has the Son of God appeared on earth, and spoken as never man spake; in vain has the eternal Father proclaimed from heaven, This is my beloved Son, hear ye him:—still sinners will not hear, they will not come to Christ for life, they will neglect the great salvation of the Gospel. Thus it always has been, thus it still is, and thus it always will be, while the heart remains what it is, and almighty grace is not exerted to subdue it.

III. The reason, why these perverse children could not be persuaded to comply with the wishes of their companions, was, that they were out of humor, or, for some other reason, felt indisposed to

gratify them. Similar is the reason, why sinners will not be persuaded to embrace the Gospel, by all the means, which God employs for this purpose. They do not come to Christ for life, because they will not. Their proud, selfish hearts, are full of enmity and opposition to God, and therefore they will not be reconciled. It is the gospel itself, which they dislike; and, therefore, how various soever may be the forms, in which it is presented, how clear soever the light, in which it is displayed, they still reject it. It is because I speak the truth, says our Saviour, that ye believe me not. This, however, sinners are, by no means, willing to acknowledge. They are afraid to confess, even to themselves, that it is hatred of the truth alone, which prevents them from embracing it. They, therefore, attempt to excuse themselves by imputing their rejection of the gospel to some other cause; and to no cause do they impute it more frequently, than to the faults of its professors, or to something in the manner or conduct of those, who preach it. Thus, we learn from our text, did the Jews. John Baptist came neither eating, nor drinking; that is, he lived in the most frugal, abstemious manner, and, as a preacher of repentance, was reserved in his deportment, and severe in his rebukes. Hence they said, He hath a devil; that is, he is a morose, visionary, melancholy man, little better than one distracted, who knows not what he says. Our Saviour, on the contrary, came eating and drinking; he associated with men in an affable, familiar man-

ner, with a view to instruct them, and for the same benevolent purpose visited and conversed with the most abandoned characters. His perverse hearers then changed their tone, and cried, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. In a similar manner do sinners at the present day, attempt to conceal and excuse their opposition to the gospel. If professors of religion and its ministers live as they ought, soberly, righteously, and godly, they are said to be too rigid, superstitious, righteous overmuch. If, on the contrary, they are of a more cheerful, social turn, the world immediately exclaims, These are your professors, your saints; but in what respect do they differ from others? If they are punctual in attending public and private meetings for religious worship, spend much time in prayer, and devote a considerable portion of their property to charitable and religious purposes, it is immediately said, that religion makes men idle and negligent of their families. If, on the other hand, they are industrious, frugal, and attentive to business, they are no less quickly accused of loving the world, as well as their neighbors, who make no pretensions to religion. If a minister reasons with his hearers in a cool, dispassionate manner, and labors to convince their understandings, he is accused of being dry and formal in his preaching, or of not believing what he says. If another preaches in a more lively, animated strain, clearly proclaims the terrors of the Lord, and warns his hearers to fly from the

wrath to come, he is charged with endeavoring to work on men's passions, and to frighten them into religion. If he insists much on the doctrines of Christianity, the necessity of faith, and the impossibility of being justified by our own works, he is accused of undervaluing morality, and representing the practice of good works as needless. If, on the other hand, he clearly exhibits the pure morality of the gospel, inculcates holiness of heart and life, and states the dreadful consequences of neglecting it, he is charged with driving men to despair by unreasonable strictness and severity. Thus in almost innumerable ways men ascribe their neglect of the gospel to the faults of its professors, or to something in the manner, in which it is preached, and thus harden themselves and others in unbelief.

But though they may thus deceive themselves, they cannot deceive God. He knows and has said, that the true reason of their rejecting it is, that they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one, that doeth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. That this is the case, is evident from men's conduct in other respects. Think not, however, my friends, that, in mentioning these things, we are indulging a spirit of recrimination or complaint. It is not for our own sakes, that we make these remarks,—for it is of very little consequence what men may say of us,—but for your sakes. It is necessary to your

conversion, that you should know what are the true causes of your rejecting the gospel; for until you know these, you will never embrace it. It is also necessary for God's glory, that the cause should evidently appear to be the obstinacy of sinners, and not any deficiency in the means employed by him for their conversion. Whether you will believe this or not, it is most certainly the truth, and you will one day be convinced that it is. Meanwhile, God has not left himself without witnesses to clear his character, and the honor of his gospel, from the groundless aspersions of sinners,—witnesses, which justify him before an ungodly world; for our Saviour assures us in the conclusion of this parable, that, however sinners may reject the gospel, and condemn the manner, in which it is preached, still, wisdom is justified of all her children. By wisdom, is here meant, either God himself, or the gospel, with the means which he employs for its promulgation. He is the only wise God, and the gospel is styled his hidden wisdom, or the wisdom of God in a mystery; while by the means, which he employs to render it successful in building up his church, his manifold wisdom, we are told, is displayed. By the children of wisdom, are intended the children of God, or in other words, those who yield to the force of his appointed means and cordially embrace the gospel. By all such, God, and his ways, are justified, and the wisdom of all his proceedings is readily acknowledged. They admire, love, and adore him, for the infinite wis-

dom, as well as goodness, which appears in the gospel plan of salvation; and, while they contemplate it, exclaim with the apostle, O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

Little less do they admire the wisdom and goodness of God, as displayed in the means, which he employs to promote the success of the gospel; and in the fulness, richness, and variety of the scriptures, and in the diversity of gifts bestowed on his ministering servants. And, while they acknowledge, that nothing but his all-conquering grace could have rendered these means efficacious to conquer their own stubborn hearts, and humbly cry, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory,—they clearly see and unanimously testify, that the only reason, why sinners do not embrace the gospel, is their hatred of the truth, and their opposition to God. Thus wisdom is justified of all her children; and this is the only encouragement, which ministers have to preach the gospel. They know, that it always has been, and that it always will be, foolishness to them that perish; and that by all such they shall themselves be considered as little better than fools and babblers, for if men have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they thus call those of his household. But they also know, that there are some, though, alas, too few, who are the children of wisdom; and that to them the preaching of the cross will always be the wisdom

of God, and the power of God unto salvation. Some such, I desire to bless God, there are in this assembly; some, who receive the truth in the love of it; some, who have felt its transforming, life-giving power; some, who, like all the children of wisdom, justify their heavenly Father and condemn themselves. It is, my christian friends, indeed a delightful employment to preach to you the unsearchable riches of Christ; for you can, in some measure, feel their worth. It is pleasant to expatiate to you on his glories and beauties; for you have eyes to discern, and hearts to feel them. It is pleasant to invite you to the gospel feast; for you have a disposition to comply. When we display the sufferings of your crucified Lord, and the sins which occasioned them, you are ready to *mourn with us* in godly sorrow and contrition of heart. And when in more cheerful strains we proclaim the happy consequences of his sufferings, and blow the trumpet, whose silver sounds are pardon, peace, and salvation, for dying men, you are equally ready to rejoice. In a word, your hearts are in unison with the gospel harp; when we strike its golden strings, your feelings vibrate to every touch; and you can accompany us, through its whole compass of sound, from the low notes of pious grief and penitential sorrow, up to the high thrilling tones of enraptured gratitude, love, and praise, which almost accord with the harps of the redeemed before the throne. Yes, you have learned that new song, which none can learn, but those who are redeemed

from the earth; that song, which is sung in heaven, which will be new to all eternity; and most happy and highly honored do I think myself, in being permitted to lead your choir on earth, and to hope that we shall sing it together in the full choir of the redeemed above. It is the greatest of my present supports and consolations, to see in you a proof, that my labors are not altogether in vain. O, then, my brethren, my fellow travellers to heaven, my fellow heirs of its glories! strive to obtain hearts more and more perfectly attuned to the gospel harp; more habitually disposed to vibrate to its celestial sounds. Daily practice the song of the redeemed, and cause the notes of heaven to be heard on earth. Strive, by adorning the doctrine of God, your Saviour, to justify the wisdom, which reveals it, and to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. And if any word I have ever spoken has been blessed to excite godly sorrow or religious feelings in your breasts, let me beseech you, in return, to pray for me, that I may be better furnished with the necessary qualifications for the ministry; that I may never utter an uncertain sound, and that, when I call sinners *to mourn* for their sins, or *to rejoice* in a Saviour, God's grace may render the call effectual.

Would to God, my friends, we could believe, that the class now addressed, included all in this assembly. But melancholy experience constrains us to believe, that the comparison in our text applies to many present, no less exactly than it did to the

Jews. As promising means, as God employed to effect their conversion, have been employed with you. Indeed you enjoy far greater advantages than they did. They had only the Old Testament. You, in addition to that, enjoy the New. They were stumbled and perplexed by the mean circumstances, in which Christ appeared, so different from what they expected. To you the reasons of his appearing in this manner, are fully explained. They rejected the Sun of Righteousness, when he first rose, and when his beams were comparatively feeble; you reject him, while shining in meridian splendor, and after his beams have blessed the nations for more than eighteen hundred years, diffusing light and happiness, wherever they come. They only *heard* the predictions of Christ; you have witnessed their exact fulfilment. They refused to hear Christ, while he spake on earth; you turn away your ears now he speaks from heaven. They refused to believe the testimony of prophets and apostles; you reject, not only their testimony, but that of all the multitudes of Christ's ministers, who have preached ever since. It is not surprising therefore, that you should refuse to believe my testimony. I have exerted, to the utmost, the abilities God has given me; in his name, I have, by turns, reasoned and persuaded, exhorted and entreated, invited and threatened, warned and promised, prayed and wept,—but to no purpose. I have set before you, all that is awful and all that is amiable, all that is alarming and all that is alluring, but

without effect. I have sounded the brazen trumpet of the law, but you have not mourned. I have blown the silver trumpet of the gospel, but you have not rejoiced. Other and more able ministers have also addressed you. You have, from this pulpit, heard, at different times, cogent reasoners, eloquent speakers, and impressive, persuasive preachers, endeavoring to prevail with you to embrace the gospel. But all has been vain, and with respect to many of you, I fear, worse than in vain. My labors have now apparently less effect upon many of you than ever. Where they once made some impression, they now pass like water over a rock; where they once convinced, they now only irritate; where I was once received with affection, I am now considered as an enemy, because I tell you the truth. My friends—if, to labor, and watch, and pray for your salvation, with a heart broken with apprehension and tortured with anxiety, lest you should fail of it; if, to goad on a worn out body and jaded mind to exertions in your behalf, under which nature sinks, and life becomes a burden; if, to desire your conversion more than riches, more than reputation, more than health, more than life,—if these things are marks of an enemy, then I am your enemy, and such an enemy, I trust, I shall continue to be to my last breath. In fact, if I except the tempter and the world, you have no enemies but yourselves. God, and Christ, and his servants, are your friends, or would be, if you would permit them; but, alas, you will not. Often would they

have gathered you, but ye would not. A deep rooted, unconquerable aversion to what you think the strictness of Christ's regulations, frustrates all the endeavors of your friends to save you. You know, that religion is important, you are convinced that it should be attended to; but you have no heart to it, you have no love for it, and, therefore, as you sometimes confess, you cannot give your minds to it. My friends, what will be the end of this? You have seen its end in the Jews. You know how terribly they were destroyed for neglecting Christ; and if they escaped not, who refused him, when he spake on earth, much more shall not ye escape, if ye turn from him who addresses you from heaven. Once more, then, we conjure you by every thing sacred and every thing dear, by every thing dreadful and every thing desirable, to renounce your unreasonable opposition, and yield yourselves the willing servants of Christ.

But there is also a third class of persons in this assembly, who must be addressed, though we hardly know in what manner to address them. It is composed of such as resemble the son in the parable, who, when his father said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard, immediately replied, I go, sir, but went not. . When we speak to these persons in an affecting, mournful manner, and bring to their view the solemnities of death, judgment, and eternity, they seem ready to weep. And when we tell them of the goodness of God, the love of Christ, and the happiness of those, who come to his marriage feast,

they are equally ready to rejoice, and seem to desire nothing so much as religion. But in a week, or perhaps in a day, they are the same as before. That there are many such among us, is evident from recent circumstances. We, a short time since, as you probably recollect, invited all, who considered religion as the one thing needful, and who meant to pursue it as such, to meet us at a certain place. We particularly requested, that none would attend, who had not made up their minds on the subject, who were not fully determined to persevere. In consequence of this invitation nearly one hundred persons assembled. I rejoiced at the sight, and immediately wrote to a society, that wished me to make a missionary tour, that, in consequence of the serious attention, that existed among my people, I could not leave them.—But where now are those, who thus pledged themselves to God, and to each other, and to me, that they would pursue religion? Alas! I fear, that their goodness has been as the morning cloud and early dew, that soon pass away. That *I* should not know what to say to such persons, is not surprising, since, as I observed at the commencement of this discourse, God himself seems as if at a loss what to do with them. As an ancient writer observes, they are, by turns, a minister's comforters and tormentors. They excite his expectations to-day, but they disappoint him most painfully to-morrow. Let them not think, however, that their temporary convictions will prevent them from being numbered among the

characters described in our text. Let them not flatter themselves, that their conversion is rendered more probable by these transitory impressions. Every resistance of conviction renders such an event more hopeless.

SERMON XI.

AMIABLE INSTINCTS NOT HOLINESS.

I. THESSALONIANS V. 23.

AND THE VERY GOD OF PEACE SANCTIFY YOU WHOLLY; AND I PRAY GOD YOUR WHOLE SPIRIT AND SOUL AND BODY BE PRESERVED BLAMELESS UNTO THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

THIS prayer of the apostle for the universal sanctification of the Thessalonian christians, leads us to notice a distinction in the natural constitution of man, which is not, perhaps, sufficiently attended to. He speaks, you will observe, not only of their body, and their spirit, but of their *soul*. The question is, what does he mean by this? The word soul, usually signifies the intellectual, immortal part of man, by which he is distinguished from the brutes. But this cannot be its meaning here, because he expressly mentions the spirit, or immortal part, in distinction from the soul, or as something different from it. What then does he mean by this term? If we turn our attention, for a moment, to irrational animals, we shall find a satisfactory answer to the question. We have no reason to believe, that these animals possess an immortal soul, or what the apostle in our text calls a spirit. On the contrary, we have reason to believe, that they do not possess such a soul; for an inspired writer

speaks of a difference between the spirit of a man, which goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast, which goeth downward to the earth. Yet animals have something, which may be called a soul, that is, something besides a body; for they can love and hate, they can be pleased or made angry; they have various wonderful instincts, and they evidently possess memory. Now take away the intellectual, immortal part of man, or what is called in the text, his spirit, and he would be like one of these animals. He would still possess not only a body, but what may be called an animal soul; and it is, I conceive, this animal soul, which the apostle means in our text, and which he prays might be sanctified and preserved blameless. By praying that this might be the case, he evidently intimates, that it ought to be the case, that the animal soul of man, as well as his body and immortal part, ought to be sanctified or made holy.

I have often explained the nature of sanctification, and its effects upon the appetites and members of the body. I propose, in the present discourse, to consider more particularly the sanctification of the animal soul of man, or that part of human nature, which does not, properly speaking, belong either to the body or to the mind, but which is distinct from both.

In the prosecution of this design I shall naturally be led to show more fully, *what belongs to the animal soul of man*, and in what respects the ani-

mal feelings of those, who are sanctified, *differ* from the same feelings in those, who are not.

The *first* thing, which I shall mention as belonging to the animal soul, is that mutual affection, which subsists between parents and their children. I consider this affection as belonging to the animal soul, because irrational animals evidently possess it. While their offspring are in a dependant state, and need their care, they display an affection for them, at least as strong, as was ever exhibited by human parents. They not only hazard, but often lose their own lives in defending their young. And their offspring no less evidently return their affection. We may add, that the sorrow, which animals feel, when deprived of their young, appears to be as deep, though by no means so lasting, as that which parents feel for the loss of their children. We have, therefore, I conceive, sufficient reason to conclude that parental and filial love, as it naturally exists in mankind, is an affection, not of the immortal part or spirit, but of the animal soul, though it is doubtless, in some measure, modified and often regulated by our rational soul. And hence we farther conclude, that these affections, while they remain unsanctified by the Spirit of God, or as they exist in men void of religion, have nothing in them of a religious nature, nothing of moral goodness or true holiness, nothing, which God is under any obligation to accept or reward. No one supposes, that there is any moral goodness in the affection, which animals feel for their young. And

the affection, which parents and children feel for each other, appears to be of the same nature. We do not naturally love our children, because God requires it; we do not love them with a view to please him; we do not love them because it is a duty; our affection for them seems to be a mere natural animal instinct, which is, in itself, neither holy nor sinful. But as it now exists in fallen man, it partakes largely of that universal depravity, which infects his whole nature. In various ways it becomes sinful itself, and leads us into other sins.

It becomes sinful, for instance, when it is inordinate. Our affection for any creature is inordinate and sinful, when we love that creature more than we love God; for he requires the first place in our affections, and forbids us to prefer any object to him. Agreeably, we find most awful punishments denounced upon Eli, because he preferred his sons to God. But all parents naturally love their children far more than they love God. Hence they take more pains to gratify them than they do to please God. Hence they are unwilling to part with them, when he calls, and often feel unreconciled and murmur, when he takes them away. Hence too, they are often so much engaged in acquiring wealth for their children, and in promoting their temporal advancement, that they neglect many of the most important duties which God requires them to perform. Now, when such are the effects of parental love, that love is evidently inordinate and sinful.

Again—affection for our children becomes sinful, when it takes a wrong direction. Such a direction it takes, when it leads us to prefer their bodies to their souls; to seek their present, rather than their future happiness; to indulge their sinful propensities, rather than give them pain by restraining and correcting them. Yet such, in a considerable degree at least, are the invariable effects of parental love in those parents, who are not influenced by religion. Such parents show no more concern for the souls and eternal happiness of their offspring, than irrational animals. They neither pray for them, nor give them religious instruction, nor set before them a religious example. Surely, no one, who believes the Bible, need be told, that such conduct is both highly irrational and exceedingly sinful.

Lastly—parental affection is sinful, when it is not prompted by right motives. It ought to proceed from a regard to the appointment and will of God. We ought to look upon them from their birth, not as mere play things—to love them, not as irrational animals do, but as rational and accountable creatures. We ought to love them for God's sake, because they are his creatures, because he gave them to us to be educated for him, and trained up for heaven. In a word, we ought to love them with a holy love, and because he requires it. But after what has been said, it is almost needless to remark, that no parents naturally love their children in this manner. Of course, there is

nothing morally good, and there is much that is morally wrong, in their parental affection. Hence it is evident, that the affection of the animal soul needs to be sanctified, or brought under the controlling influence of religion. It must be sanctified, or we cannot be universally holy. And from the preceding remarks it will be easy to learn in what this sanctification consists, and what will be its effects. It is sanctified, when it is prompted by right motives, when it takes a right direction, and when it is kept in due subordination to the will of God. When this is done, we shall love our children as God's gifts, and for his sake. We shall prefer him to them. We shall feel ready to resign them, when he calls; and if he takes them away, our sorrow for their loss will have no mixture of repining or discontent. While they are spared to us, we shall make it our chief concern to educate them for God and heaven; their souls will receive a much greater share of our attention than their bodies; we shall be far more anxious for their eternal, than their temporal welfare; and to secure it, will be the principal object of all our exertions respecting them. Those, whose affection for their children is not thus regulated and directed, may be certain, that it is not yet sanctified, that it is sinful in the sight of God, and that they are very far from being such parents, as he approves. And yet they may feel very well satisfied with themselves; they may regard themselves as patterns of parental goodness, and even hope that God will reward them as such.

Such is the blindness and deceitfulness of the human heart.

The *second* affection of the animal soul, which I shall mention, is that pain, which is excited by seeing our fellow creatures in distress, and that instinctive desire, which we feel, to relieve them. This affection is called sympathy, pity, and compassion. I infer, that it belongs to the animal part of our nature, from the fact, that many species of irrational animals often appear to feel it in a very high degree; and from the equally well known fact, that it is usually felt most strongly by children at a very early age, before the developement of their intellectual powers, and while they can scarcely be considered as rational beings. And in persons farther advanced, it seems to be a merely animal instinct; for it is not guided by reason, and often operates partially and capriciously. Many persons, for instance, who are painfully affected by the sight of bodily suffering, seem to feel no compassion for the mental sufferings of their fellow creatures; and in others, who boast much of their sensibility, it seems to defeat the very end, for which it was given, by rendering them unable to support the sight of keen distress, and impelling them to fly from their suffering friends, when they most need their assistance. Indeed, many plead this as an excuse for neglecting to visit the sick and necessitous, and for leaving their friends, when any painful surgical operation is to be performed. They urge that their sensibility is too exquisite, that their

feelings are too easily affected, to allow them to witness such scenes, or to perform such duties. We may add, that the same persons, when provoked, are often cruel, and feel no pity for the sufferings of those, who have offended them. What is still worse, they feel no compassion for the souls of men; no grief, in view of the future miseries, to which sinners are exposed; nor will they make the smallest exertion to save them from these miseries. If a friend or relative is sick of a mortal disease, and, unconscious of his danger, is flattering himself with hopes of a speedy recovery, they will not speak a word to undeceive him, and perhaps will not even allow others to do it, lest it should give him pain. Supremely selfish, even in their sensibility, they leave him to discover his danger, when too late, to die unprepared, rather than perform the painful duty of warning him, that death is approaching. How widely this pity or compassion, if it deserves the name, differs from that, which glowed in the bosom of our Saviour, no one, who has read the New Testament with attention, needs be informed. It is true, he pitied the coporeal sufferings, which he witnessed, and was ever ready to relieve them; but it is equally true, that he felt and displayed incomparably more compassion for their perishing souls. It was to save *them*, that he came from heaven. It was to save *them*, that he shed, not tears only, but blood. He bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and freely consented to be wounded for their transgressions, to be

bruised for their iniquities, and to pour out his soul unto death, that they might live. His compassion evidently differed very widely from that blind instinct, that animal affection, which we dignify with the name. It was benevolence viewing misery, and willing to make that misery its own, not merely by sympathising with it, but by actually bearing it, that the miserable might escape.

Nor was his sensibility blunted, as ours often is, by familiarity with scenes of suffering, or by the criminality of the sufferers. It is evident, then, that our natural sympathy, amiable as it appears, necessary as it is, needs to be sanctified, and that until it is sanctified, it has nothing in it of moral goodness, or true benevolence. Before it can lay any just claim to these titles, it must be made to resemble the compassion of our Saviour. It must cease to be capricious, partial, and selfish in its operations. It must make us willing to deny ourselves, and to suffer pain, inconvenience, and provocation, for the sake of alleviating the distresses of others. It must be excited by the sufferings of our enemies, as well as those of other men. Above all, it must be excited chiefly by the miseries, to which the souls of men are exposed; and enable us, when viewing our unconverted relatives, to say with Paul, I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh. So far only, as we can truly say this, are our natural sensibility and sympathy sanctified. And if they are not thus sanctified,

in some degree, at least, in vain shall we pretend to belong to the merciful, who shall obtain mercy of God, or claim any relation to our Saviour; for if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if there is any thing in the spirit of Christ, by which he was peculiarly distinguished, it was compassion for the souls of men.

There are two other marks, by which we may be assisted in ascertaining how far our natural sympathies are sanctified. Merely natural sympathy usually declines, as men advance in years; so that, if they live to old age, it becomes almost extinct. But when it is sanctified, it not only continues, but increases in proportion to the christian's religious advancement. In this case it is truly beautiful to see the affectionate sensibility of youth united with the experience, firmness, and mature wisdom of age; to see the veteran disciple, who has learned to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ, putting on bowels of mercies, tenderness and gentleness of mind, to see the same tree adorned at once with the blossoms of spring and the fruits of autumn. The second mark of sanctified sympathy, is a disposition to participate in the joys, as well as sorrows, of our fellow creatures. This the scriptures require. They command not only to weep with those who weep, but to rejoice with those who rejoice. This command we shall obey, so far as our natural affections are sanctified. We shall make the happiness of others our own. But merely natural affection will not lead to this. On

the contrary, it will often lead us to envy those, who are more prosperous than ourselves, to repine at their prosperity, especially if they are our rivals, and to wish that some calamity may befall them. He, in whom this disposition is subdued, he, that can truly rejoice in the happiness of those who do not love him, may safely conclude that he has made advances in the work of sanctification.

Thirdly—What is commonly called the natural temper, or disposition, seems to belong chiefly to the animal soul. I say, *chiefly*, for some of the passions, which affect the temper, such as pride, ambition, avarice, envy, malice, and revenge, evidently belong to the spirit, or immortal part; for we are taught, that evil spirits, who have no animal soul, are subject to these passions. But setting these passions aside, there is something in the natural temper or disposition of men, which may be, and which indeed often is, called constitutional. In this respect different persons differ very widely, even from their birth. Some appear to be constitutionally timid, mild, gentle, quiet, affectionate, and yielding; while others are bold, boisterous, restless, irritable, and obstinate. In a word, some have naturally an amiable, and others an unamiable temper. Now that this difference of temper depends upon the animal soul, appears, to say the least, highly probable from the fact, that we find a similar difference among irrational animals, even among those of the same species. For instance, among the domestic animals, which are employed

by man, there seems to be as great a diversity of natural temper, as is found among human beings. Some are quiet, mild, gentle, and tractable. Others, of the same species, are irritable, quarrelsome, and perverse. What renders it still more probable, that the temper belongs to the animal soul, is the well known fact, that it seems to be much affected by the state of the health. Persons, who, while in good health, appear to be mild, affectionate, and contented, will often, when assailed by disease, become peevish, fretful, irritable and querulous. This is especially the case with children, who are less careful, than older persons, to conceal their feelings. Now every one will probably acknowledge, that when the temper is naturally unamiable and bad, it needs to be sanctified. When persons of such a temper profess to have become christians, an amelioration of their temper is always expected. This is, perhaps, one of the first proofs of their sincerity, for which their acquaintance look; and if it is not found, their professions are naturally supposed to be insincere. On the contrary, when a great and obvious change for the better is witnessed in the temper of such persons, their sincerity is usually acknowledged, and religion is honored. This being the case, it is evidently of very great importance, that those professing christians, whose temper is naturally bad, should pay the strictest attention to this subject, and make it their chief concern to have their temper sanctified by divine grace. Until this is

done, they can neither possess themselves, nor exhibit to others, satisfactory evidence of their sincerity, nor can they adorn the religion, which they profess. Indeed, they will not fail to dishonor it, and cannot be either useful, consistent, or happy. As persons, who have such a temper, are not unfrequently bold, resolute, and unyielding, it is easy for them to be firm, zealous, and courageous in the cause of Christ, and they may easily mistake their constitutional courage for holy boldness and christian zeal. But let them beware of this mistake. Let them not conclude they have made much progress in the work of sanctification, until their zeal and boldness are guided by knowledge, tempered with gentleness and prompted by love; nor until they habitually possess and exercise a kind, affectionate, meek, humble, contented and quiet spirit. When this is done, they will resemble their Master, who united in himself the apparently inconsistent qualities of the lion and the lamb, the serpent and the dove,—and will be of all christians the most amiable, exemplary, and useful.

But while all will allow, that a naturally bad temper needs to be thus sanctified, there are many who by no means suppose, that tempers naturally amiable equally need sanctification. But if we take the scriptures for our guide, a little reflection will convince us, that this is actually the case. The scripture teaches, that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. But there is nothing of the nature of holiness in a naturally amiable

temper. Holiness consists in a conformity to the law of God. But persons, who possess the temper of which we are speaking, naturally pay no more regard to the law of God than others do. They are not gentle, kind, and affectionate, because God requires them to be, or because they wish to please him; for they often live without God in the world. They do not naturally love prayer, or the Bible, or the Saviour, or any part of religion; but it is as difficult to draw their attention and affections to these subjects, as it would be if their tempers were unamiable. The young ruler, who asked our Saviour what he should do to inherit eternal life, evidently possessed a naturally amiable disposition. Yet when Christ said to him, Take up thy cross and follow me, he was no more willing to obey, than were the scribes and pharisees. Hence we find, that when our Saviour asserted the necessity of regeneration, repentance, and faith, he represented them as alike necessary to all, and made no exception in favor of amiable characters. It is therefore, evident, that, in his view, such characters need sanctification no less than other men. Their natural affections must be *christianized*, if I may so express it, or baptized by the Holy Spirit, before they can possess any thing of the nature of true religion. Until this is done, they are no more christians, merely for possessing such affections, than an animal of a mild and tractable disposition is a christian. And besides this general radical defect of such characters, which consists in an en-

tire want of true holiness, they are subject to many particular defects; defects, which often attend them even after they become christians. They are often constitutionally timid, irresolute, and easily prevailed upon by solicitations to do what they know, or, at least, suspect to be wrong. To these solicitations, they find it very difficult to say, NO—with firmness, and to obey the precept, which says, My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. Nor do they usually display much zeal and courage, in doing good, or in maintaining their Master's cause. Many of them also are constitutionally indolent: Hence, if they become christians, they are often slothful christians. Like the sluggard mentioned by Solomon, they are too ready to say, There is a lion in the way; and the fear of man, a fear of giving offence, often entangles them in a snare. Often too, they forget or neglect the rule of being just before they are generous; and, prompted by natural temper, give away what is not theirs to give. If they *do not* become christians, these defects prevail in their character in a still greater degree, and often prove their ruin, both for this world and the next. A large proportion of those, who fall a prey to dissipation, gaming, intemperance, and debauchery, are of this class. They are, at first, led into these vices by the example and solicitations of their companions, which they have not sufficient strength of mind to resist; and afterwards continue to practice them through habit. If they escape this snare, and

maintain a correct moral character, they are in danger of falling into other errors, hardly less fatal. As they are commonly much beloved and esteemed, their company is sought after, and they find themselves so pleasantly situated in this world, that they have little leisure or inclination to think of another. Besides, the good opinion of their fellow creatures, tempts them to think too highly of themselves, and to trust in their amiable temper and correct morals, while they neglect the Saviour of sinners, the only name under heaven, by which any can be saved. Surely, then, no one, who regards the scriptures, can doubt, whether such characters need to be sanctified by divine grace. And those of them, in whom this work is begun, need to go on unto perfection. They must judge of their progress towards perfection by the degree, in which they conquer those sins and errors, to which they have a constitutional propensity. If they are enabled to overcome indolence and timidity, and to be zealous, bold, and diligent in the cause of Christ; if they can resolutely resist temptation; if their natural mildness and gentleness are exalted into true benevolence; if they become as unwilling to offend God, as they naturally are to offend their fellow creatures; and if they become more and more sensible of their constitutional failings, and more solicitous to correct them,—they have reason to hope, that the work of sanctification is rapidly advancing.

I have now mentioned the principal affections of

the animal soul, and attempted to show, that they need to be sanctified. It remains to make some improvement of the subject.

1. What has been said, may throw some light upon the doctrine of man's entire depravity, and remove some plausible objections, which are often urged against its truth. When we say, that men are entirely depraved, we mean, as I have often stated to you, that they are entirely destitute of holiness. They are as destitute of holiness as a dead man is of life; and hence they are said by the inspired writers to be dead in trespasses and sins. In reply, the adversaries of the doctrine refer us to parental and filial affection, to that sympathy or compassion, which seem natural to man; to the amiable tempers, which many seem to possess, and to the moral actions, which flow from these several sources. They suppose the existence of these things proves conclusively, that men are not entirely depraved. But it has been clearly shown, if I mistake not, that there is no holiness in any of these things; that we possess them in common with irrational animals; that they are, in many respects, imperfect and sinful, and that they lead us into many sins. Now if this has been proved, it evidently follows, that the existence of these animal affections is no proof at all, that men are not entirely depraved. It has also been proved, indeed our text clearly proves, that these affections of the animal soul need to be sanctified, or made holy. But if they need to be made holy, it is evident,

that they are not originally holy, but that they are, on the contrary, depraved, or sinful; for nothing, which is not sinful, needs to be made holy.

2. From this subject it appears, that those who are sanctified, and those who are not, differ very widely, even in those respects, in which they seem to be alike. For instance, both classes eat and drink; but he, who is sanctified, eats and drinks to the glory of God, while the unconverted sinner eats and drinks to gratify himself. Both classes love their children. But in unsanctified persons, parental love is a merely animal affection, inordinate, wrongly directed, and not subordinate to the love of God. In those, who are sanctified, on the contrary, it is a holy affection rightly directed, regulated by God's law, and in subordination to his love. Both classes may pity and relieve the distressed. But the former are led to do this by a blind animal instinct, which is capricious, irregular, and partial in its operations; while the compassion of the latter is elevated and ennobled by divine grace, and resembles that, which glowed in the bosom of our Saviour. Both classes may possess amiable tempers, and live correct moral lives. But the amiable tempers of the former, and the morality, which they sometimes produce, do not spring from religion; they are not influenced by religion; nor have they any reference either to God and his law, or to Christ and his gospel. The temper and morals of the latter, on the contrary, spring from religion in the heart; they are the ef-

fects of God's law written in the heart; their love to men flows wholly from love to God; their morality is true christian morality, and they are constrained by the love of Christ to imitate his example. In short, the governing motives, the main-springs of action, in the sanctified and unsanctified man, are totally different; and since God looks at the motives, since, in his view, the character of every action is determined by its motive, it is evident, that the same actions, which are good when performed by a good man, may be altogether wrong when performed by a sinner. The sanctified, and the unsanctified may apparently resemble each other in temper and conduct, and yet the latter may be justly punished, while the former are rewarded. Hence we see,

3. How greatly and fatally those are deceived, who found a hope of heaven on their naturally amiable tempers and moral lives. We have seen, that these need to be sanctified, and that, till they are so, they are imperfect and sinful. Those then, who found their hope on these things, found it on their sins and imperfections. They found it on something, which needs pardon, and which cannot therefore merit reward. St. Paul tells us, that if any supposed they had something of this kind, in which they might safely trust, he had more. But, he adds, what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; and he proceeds to inform us, that he counted all his supposed goodness and morality as mere filth, that he might win Christ.

O then, let all, who share in Paul's salvation, imitate in this respect the example of Paul.

4. This subject may assist us to understand that memorable declaration of Christ, From him that hath not shall be taken away even that, which he seemeth to have. We have seen, that every thing, which appears to be naturally good and amiable in sinners, such as parental and filial affection, sympathy or compassion, and a sweet natural temper, belongs to the animal soul. Now this dies with the body. Nothing survives death, but the immortal spirit. Of course, at death, sinners, who have no grace, no real goodness, will lose all this apparent goodness, all those natural affections, which made them appear amiable here; and nothing will remain, but a spirit wholly given up to the power and rage of malignant passions. Thus from those, who have no grace, no real goodness or holiness, will be taken away all which they now appear to have. O then, be persuaded, ye, who now appear amiable, to seek, most earnestly to seek the sanctifying grace of God. This alone can render your apparent goodness real, and cause it to be permanent. This alone can stamp on your souls that image of God, which consisteth in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, and without which no man shall ever see the Lord.

To conclude—Let me urge all, who profess to be the disciples of Christ, to aim at universal and complete sanctification, even to be sanctified throughout in spirit, in soul, and in body. Re-

member, that to aim at this, is your indispensable duty. Regard it too as your privilege. O, how desirable it is, to be thus universally holy; to have the immortal spirit clean and white, the animal soul without spot, and the body rendered worthy of such an inhabitant. This, you are taught to believe, will, at length, be your happy state in heaven. Will you not, then, strive to make as near approaches to it, as possible, on earth? But the present subject leads me to press upon you, more particularly, the sanctification of the animal soul, with its affections. This is one of the principal seats of depravity. Let it then be one of your chief objects to have it sanctified. Think it not sufficient to love your children, unless your affection for them be such as has been described. Think it not sufficient to be compassionate and sympathising, unless your compassion resemble that of your Saviour. And be not satisfied with your temper, until you feel, in full strength, that heaven born charity, which seeketh not her own.

SERMON XII.

THE PROMISED FRUIT OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

ISAIAH, LIII. 11.

HE SHALL SEE OF THE TRAVAIL OF HIS SOUL, AND SHALL BE SATISFIED.

COULD any of us have seen what angels saw, when the Son of God left the bosom of his Father, and exchanged a throne in heaven for a manger on earth; could we have seen him divesting himself of his glory, laying aside the form of God, assuming the form of a servant, and appearing on earth, in the likeness of sinful flesh, with the avowed purpose of living in poverty, and dying an ignominious, agonizing, and accursed death,—we should naturally have been led to exclaim, What adequate object can he have in view? What motive can be sufficiently powerful to induce such a being to make sacrifices so great, to encounter sufferings so exquisite! This question an apostle has partially answered. He has informed us, that Jesus Christ endured the cross and despised the shame for the sake of the joy set before him. In what this joy consisted, we may learn from the chapter before us, and especially from our text. It is here predicted, that he shall see of the travail of his soul, that is, of the fruits or effects of his sufferings, and be satisfied. In the context we are informed what these fruits will be. He shall justify many, he shall see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper

in his hand. The joy set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame, was then the joy, which would result from seeing his Father glorified and sinners saved, in consequence of his incarnation, sufferings, and death. This, our text declares, he shall see, and the sight will satisfy him. While contemplating it, he will feel, that he is amply rewarded for all his sacrifices, toils, and sufferings.

My hearers, the prediction in our text has already been partially fulfilled; it will be fulfilled in a still greater degree, before time shall end; and its complete fulfilment will be witnessed in eternity. These three assertions we propose to illustrate, establish, and improve.

I. The prediction before us has already been partially fulfilled. Already has our Redeemer seen much of the fruit of his sufferings. Our once barren world, watered by his tears and his blood, has already produced a large harvest of righteousness and salvation. His cross, like Aaron's rod, has budded and blossomed, and begun to bear precious incorruptible fruit. From his cross sprang all the religious knowledge, all the real goodness, all the true happiness which has existed among mortals since the fall. On his cross, which, like the ladder seen by Jacob in vision, unites heaven and earth, myriads of immortal beings, who were sinking into the bottomless abyss, have ascended to the celestial mansions;—other myriads, now alive, are following them in the ascent. In the patriarchs,

prophets, and pious Israelites; in the apostles, and other primitive preachers of christianity; in the numerous converts, who, by their instrumentality, were turned from darkness to light; in all the truly pious individuals, who have since existed among men; in all the real christians who are now on earth, our Redeemer has seen the fruits of his sufferings. In every real christian now present he sees one of these fruits, sees a soul, which has been redeemed by his blood from endless wretchedness and despair, and made an heir of glory and honor and immortality. O then, how much, how very much, has he already seen effected, in fulfilment of the promise before us! How many immortal souls have been plucked as brands from everlasting burnings! How many individuals have been instructed, sanctified, pardoned, comforted, and made more than conquerors, through him that loved them! How many pious families have rejoiced together in his goodness; how many churches have been planted, watered, and made to flourish! How much happiness have the members of all these churches enjoyed in life, in death, and in heaven! What an exceedingly great, and almost innumerable multitude of happy spirits, redeemed from among men, are now surrounding the throne of God and the Lamb! And even while I speak, the number of these happy spirits, and the harvest, which springs from a Saviour's sufferings, is increasing. Even while I speak, sinners in different parts of the world are flocking into the kingdom of

God. Even while I speak, immortal souls, washed in a Saviour's blood, sanctified by his Spirit, and just made victorious over the last enemy, death, are entering heaven from the four quarters of the globe, and commencing their everlasting song,—Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever and ever.

And while our thrice blessed Redeemer has thus seen, and still sees the happiness of human beings increased by his sufferings, he has also seen, and still sees the glory of God augmented in an equal degree. He has seen millions, who were once enemies to his Father, transformed to friends; he has seen millions, who once blindly worshipped false gods, and ascribed to them the glory of creating, preserving, and governing the world, turning from their worthless idols to worship the only living and true God, who made heaven and earth. He has seen his Father's law obeyed and honored by multitudes, who, but for him would have continued to trample it under foot. He has seen ten thousand times ten thousand of prayers and ascriptions of praise, ascending from a world, which, but for his interposition, would never have offered one of these acceptable, spiritual sacrifices to his Father. He has seen the eternal throne surrounded, and him who sits upon it adored by almost countless multitudes, who were once dishonoring God on earth, and preparing to blaspheme him in hell. In fine, he has seen his religion flying through the

world as on angels' wings, scattering blessings wherever she comes, and loudly proclaiming peace on earth, good will to men, and glory to God in the highest. Surely then, the prediction before us has already been partially fulfilled.

II. During the period which must elapse before time shall end, this prediction shall receive a much more ample accomplishment. That this will be the case, we might almost venture to predict from present appearances, even were the scriptures silent respecting it. Never since the days of the apostles have such exertions, as are now witnessed, been made to extend the triumphs of the cross; never has such a grand and powerful combination of means been employed for this purpose; never has the blessing of heaven more evidently attended human efforts; never have been seen such clear and striking indications that a great moral revolution in the world is approaching. If we turn to the scriptures, we shall find the hopes and expectations thus excited abundantly confirmed. We there find the most explicit predictions, the most animating assurances of the future universal prevalence of pure christianity. All that has been seen, is but the first fruits of that rich harvest, which our Redeemer will yet gather in. He who cannot lie has not only promised, but sworn by himself, that the Jews and Gentiles shall be brought into the fold of Christ, that the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth, even as the waters cover the seas; that the kingdoms of this world shall become the

kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour, and that, for many successive ages, he shall reign triumphantly over every nation, and kindred, and people. While predicting this extension of the Messiah's kingdom, and describing the future glories of his reign on earth, the sacred writers exhaust all the powers of language, and burst forth into such poetic, enraptured strains, as the Spirit of God could alone inspire. And O, how will our Redeemer see the effects of his sufferings, when all these glowing descriptions shall be realized; when, with benevolent delight, he shall glance his eye over this once ruined, polluted, wretched world, and see all his enemies baffled; ignorance, error, superstition, vice, and misery banished, his religion every where enthroned in the hearts of men, the earth filled with holiness, and happiness, and peace; while from fertile plains, smiling villages, flourishing towns, and populous cities, one universal cloud of incense ascends before God, and the voice of the whole human family, as the voice of one man, pours forth the language of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving to the Father of all; and the wide open gates of heaven are continually thronged by those, who pour into it from the east and the west, from the north and the south, to swell the number of its happy inhabitants, and add new voices to its everlasting songs! What countless myriads will then be saved! How gloriously will salvation triumph! How will God be glorified, how will the fruits of holiness abound, when all those parts of the world,

which are now a moral wilderness, shall become as Eden, and the whole earth be made as the garden of God. And how will human happiness be increased, when generation after generation shall taste the felicity of heaven, during a long life on earth; and then, by an easy and peaceful death, be removed to the mansions of eternal rest.

III. But it is to the final consummation of all things, it is to eternity, that we must look for the complete fulfilment of this animating prediction. Not till then will the great work of redemption be finished; not till then will our Redeemer see so much of the fruit of his sufferings, as is necessary to satisfy him. But then he will see all, that is here promised; all, that he ever expected to see; all, that is wanting to render him perfectly satified. He will then see the bodies of all his people raised from the grave, glorious, incorruptible, immortal, and perfectly resembling his own; for, says an apostle, addressing christians, he shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power, by which he is able to subdue even all things to himself.

Then will his triumph over death and the grave be complete. Then, as inspiration expresses it, death will be swallowed up of victory. Then, too, our Redeemer will see all his chosen people assembled around him, perfect in holiness, and perfectly happy in the contemplation of his glory and the enjoyment of his presence. For this he

prayed just before his crucifixion. Father, said he, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. He cannot then be entirely satisfied, till this prayer is answered in its full extent, till every one whom the Father has given him is brought home to glory. At the period, to which we refer, and not till then, will this be done. The last redeemed sinner will then have exchanged earth for heaven, and have begun to gaze with rapture on the unveiled glories of his Redeemer.

Finally—Our Saviour will then see the great work, for the accomplishment of which he died, completed. He will see that spiritual edifice, the foundation of which was laid in his blood, which has been so long erecting, standing before him finished, resplendent in glory, and perfect in beauty. Says an apostle, Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. The church which Christ thus loved, and for which he gave himself, is called his body. All who compose it are styled his members. Now until the last member of this mystical body is raised to heaven, and fixed in its destined place, the body itself will not be perfect and complete, and, of course, Christ its head will not be satisfied. But when that is done, his satisfaction will be complete.

Then all his members will be fixed forever in the place, which he is now preparing for them, in a state of absolute perfection—perfection in knowledge, and holiness, and happiness. And O, what tongue of man can describe, what finite mind can conceive, the enrapturing sight, on which the eye of our Redeemer will then rest! He will see an innumerable multitude of immortal beings, with capacities like those of angels, reflecting in body and in mind, his own spotless, glorious image, no less perfectly than the polished mirror reflects the dazzling image of the noon day sun. He will see them all filled to overflowing, with unutterable felicity, and glowing, like the seraphs around them, with burning love and melting gratitude to him, who redeemed them by his blood. He will see them casting their eyes downward to contemplate the lake of fire, the everlasting burnings, from which they have been thus redeemed, and then raising them to gaze on their Deliverer, with emotions, which even the language of heaven cannot express, but which he can read in their swelling, and almost bursting hearts. He will see them, in holy transports of affection and humility, casting themselves and their crowns at his feet; hear them cry, with a voice like that of many waters, and of mighty thunderings, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Blessing, and glory, and honor, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever. Stretching his omniscient [illegible] through eternity, he will see them en-

joying all this happiness, and ascribing all this glory to God, during its endless ages; their minds continually expanding, their faculties enlarging, and their souls drinking in more and more of that fulness of the Godhead, the whole of which they can never contain. And while he sees all this, he will see, that, but for his sufferings and death, all these immortal beings, now so holy, so glorious, so happy, would have been sinners, demons, fiends, doomed to drink forever of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. All this, and much more than this, much more than man or angel can describe, he will see, and while he sees it, will exclaim, Father, it is enough; thy promise is fulfilled; I am satisfied.

Permit me now, my hearers, to lead your attention to some reflections, which our subject naturally suggests, and which will, I trust, be found to have an intimate connection with the object* for which we are now assembled.

1. How great, how glorious, how worthy of its Author, does the work of redemption appear, when viewed in the light of this subject. If it was a work worthy of God, to create the world; if it is a work worthy of God, to preserve and govern the world, much more was it a work worthy of him to redeem the world. If his infinite perfections were

*This Sermon was preached at the first meeting of the Foreign Missionary Society of the County of Cumberland, Auxiliary to the American Board.

ever called into action by an adequate motive, it was when they were called to exert themselves in effecting the salvation of a self-destroyed race of immortal intelligences, and to promote the glory of his great name in effecting it. The accomplishment of such a work as this was a motive, which might well bring down the Son of God from heaven, and carry him through all his toils, and support him under all his sufferings. His toils and sufferings were indeed inconceivably great; but so was the object which he had in view; and so was his promised reward, the joy set before him.

2. What conceptions is this subject suited to give us of the happiness, which is now enjoyed, and which, through eternity, will be enjoyed by our divine Redeemer! You have all, my friends, heard much of the happiness of heaven. Those of you, who are christians, know something of it experimentally; for you have tasted the first fruits of the heavenly inheritance. Your conceptions of it are, indeed, exceedingly inadequate, but you know it to be great. Estimate, then, as far as you are able, the amount of happiness, which a single individual will enjoy in heaven, during a whole eternity. Proceed to multiply this amount of happiness by the almost countless number of the redeemed. Then recollect, that Jesus Christ has said, it is more blessed to give than to receive; that is, there is more blessedness, or happiness, in giving, than in receiving. Now Jesus Christ gives, and saints and angels receive, all the happiness,

which creatures will ever enjoy in heaven. Of course, as the giver of this happiness, is more blessed, more happy, than all the receivers, could we then concentrate in one bosom all the happiness, which is enjoyed by all the saints and angels in heaven, it would still be inferior, far inferior to that, which is enjoyed by Jesus Christ alone. Christian, does not your heart exult to hear of the happiness which your Saviour enjoys? Does it not labor, and swell almost to bursting, while vainly attempting to fathom that bottomless tide of felicity, which, every moment pours, and through eternity will continue to pour, all its fulness into his infinite mind!

3. In the light of this subject how great, how lovely does our Saviour's benevolence appear? It is to his benevolence alone, that his happiness is to be ascribed. It is the benevolent mind only, which finds more happiness in giving than in receiving. Of course, if our Saviour were not benevolent, he would never place his happiness in making others happy. He would be far from being satisfied, far from feeling that he is amply rewarded for all his toils and sufferings, by seeing others enjoy the fruits of them. But this it appears, does satisfy him. All the reward which he expected, all which he desires is, the satisfaction of seeing God glorified, and sinners saved. Here then is perfect disinterested benevolence, benevolence worthy of him whose name is love.

And now, my hearers, permit me to apply these

remarks to the object for which we are assembled. This object is, as you are all aware, to unite our efforts, and afford our assistance, in extending the benefits of redemption, in carrying on the great work of man's salvation. We have seen that this is the noblest of God's works, a work, which is every way worthy of himself. To be employed as a willing instrument in carrying on this work, is then the greatest honor, which God can confer on man. Would you not think it an honor to be employed by God in creating a world? Would you not think it an honor to be employed by him in preserving and governing a world? But greater, far greater is the honor of being employed as a co-worker with God in saving a world. This honor have all his saints. This honor we are invited to share.

Again—We have seen, that, with the promotion of this work, our Saviour's enjoyment of his promised reward is connected. In proportion as this work advances, his satisfaction increases. And does not this fact furnish all who love him with a powerful motive to exertion? Professed disciple of Jesus Christ, do you love, do you wish to gratify your Master, your Redeemer? Is it the language of your heart, what shall I render to my Lord for all his benefits? If so, this is the answer, Labor to promote that cause, which lies so near his heart; that cause, for which he shed his blood. Labor and pray, that the Saviour may see more and more of the fruit of his sufferings. While

doing this, you will, in effect, be employed by God as a hand, to convey to him a part of his promised reward. And what employment can be more honorable, more delightful, more congenial with the best and strongest feelings of every Christian's heart!

Farther, we have seen that this subject exhibits, in the clearest light, our Saviour's disinterested benevolence. We have seen, that the joy set before him, for the sake of which he endured the cross and despised the shame, was the joy, not of exalting or of enriching himself, but of communicating happiness to others. This, this, was all the reward, which his benevolent heart desired, for labors and sufferings unexampled. In this, as in other respects, his example is proposed to us for our imitation. And imitate it we must, if we would prove that we are his disciples; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. I repeat it, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. No, the man who does not possess and exhibit some portion of the Saviour's disinterested, self-denying benevolence, of his compassion for immortal souls, of his readiness to labor and suffer for their salvation, is not, cannot be, a Christian. He may be any thing else, but he cannot be a Christian. Nor can *he* be a disciple of Christ, who would not feel himself amply rewarded for all his exertions by the pleasure of seeing them crowned with success. This reward will, as we have seen, satisfy our Saviour. Surely then, it ought to sat-

isfy us. And this reward, all, who cordially engage in promoting his cause, shall receive. For the Saviour must be satisfied. God has said it, and it must be done. He must have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. As sin has reigned unto death, so must grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Talk not of difficulties. What are difficulties to omnipotence; to him, who speaks, and it is done; who commands, and it stands fast; and who can cause a nation to be born in a day? All then, who cordially engage in this work, may engage in it with the certainty, that they shall not labor in vain. As certain as it is that the Saviour shall not lose his reward, so certain it is, that they shall not lose theirs. His interest and theirs are inseparably united; when he is satisfied, they will be satisfied. Nor will his faithful servants be required to wait long for their promised reward. Not very far distant, probably, is the period, when our Redeemer shall see the promise before us fulfilled in its utmost extent. Already do we witness no equivocal indications, that its complete fulfilment is approaching. Already has the day of millennial glory begun to dawn. Already has the day star been seen from mountains of the East. Already are "blest voices" heard exclaiming from heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; and we have no small reason for hoping, that, before the conclusion of

the present century, the same blest voices will be heard to cry, Alleluia, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever! My hearers, when this period shall arrive, will it not be in the highest degree painful and mortifying to be constrained to say, the long predicted, long expected hour is at length come, but I have done nothing to hasten its arrival. My Saviour has gathered in his promised harvest, but none of the seed, which produced it, was sown by my hand, or watered by my tears! If you would not be the subjects of reflections so mortifying, seize the precious opportunity, which is afforded you, of committing your seed to the earth, so that hereafter, when he who soweth, and he who reapeth shall rejoice together, you may participate in the joy of your Lord.

Let no one attempt to excuse himself by saying, My services are not wanted. Let no one say, Since God has promised, that his Son shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, we may safely sit still, and leave him to fulfil this promise. He will indeed fulfil it, but he will fulfil it by human agency. And before it can be fulfilled, before every enemy can be put under our Saviour's feet, many exertions must be made, much treasure expended, and many battles fought. Satan, the prince and god of this world, will not resign his usurped dominion without a struggle. The more clearly he perceives, that his time is short, the greater will be his wrath, and the more violent his efforts. During

that portion of time, which yet remains, the war which he has long waged with the Captain of our Salvation, will be carried on with unexampled fury. If you would survey the progress and result of this war; cast your eyes over the world, which is to be at once the field of battle, and the prize of victory. See the earth filled with strong holds and high places, in which the prince of darkness has fortified and made himself strong against the Almighty. See all the hosts of hell, and a large proportion of the inhabitants, the power, the wealth, the talents, and influence of the world ranged under his infernal standard. See his whole artillery of falsehoods, sophistries, objections, temptations, and persecution, brought into the field, to be employed against the cause of truth. See ten thousand pens, and ten times ten thousand tongues, hurling his poisoned darts among its friends. On the other hand, see the comparatively small band of our Saviour's faithful soldiers drawn up in opposing ranks, and advancing to the assault, clothed in panoply divine, the banner waving over their heads, while in their hands they wield unsheathed the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, the only weapon, which they are allowed, or wish, to employ. The charge is sounded, the assault is made, the battle is joined,—far and wide its fury rages; over mountains and plains, over islands and continents, extends the long line of conflict; for a time, alternate victory and defeat wait on either side. Now, exulting acclamations from the

christian army proclaim the fall of some strong hold of Satan. Anon, infuriated shouts from the opposing ranks announce to the world, that the cause of Christ is losing ground, or that some christian standard bearer is fallen. Meanwhile, far above the noise and tumult of the battle, the Captain of our salvation sits serene, issuing his commands, directing the motions of his followers, sending seasonable aid to such, as are ready to faint, and occasionally causing to be seen the lighting down of his own glorious arm, before which whole squadrons fall, or fly, or yield themselves willing captives. Feeble, and yet more feeble still, gradually becomes the opposition of his foes. Loud, and yet louder still, rise the triumphant acclamations of his friends, till at length, the cry of Victory! victory!—resounds from earth to heaven; and, Victory! victory!—is echoed back from heaven to earth. The warfare ceases,—the prize is won,—all enemies are put under the conquering Saviour's feet; the whole earth, with joy, receives her king; and his kingdom, which consists in righteousness, and peace and holy joy, becomes co-extensive with the world. Such, my hearers, is the nature, and such will be the termination and result of the contest, which is now carrying on in the world. In this contest we are now all engaged on the one part or the other; for in this warfare there are no neutrals, he that is not with Christ is against him. Let us all, then, if we have not already done it, enlist under his banner, and

make a common cause with him against a rebellious world; and when he shall appear to judge the universe, he will say to us, Come, and sit down with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am seated with my Father on his throne.

SERMON XIII.

MESSIAH'S VICTORY PREDICTED AND DESIRED.

PSALM XLV. 3, 4, 5.

GIRD THY SWORD UPON THY THIGH, O MOST MIGHTY, WITH THY GLORY AND THY MAJESTY; AND IN THY MAJESTY RIDE PROSPEROUSLY BECAUSE OF TRUTH AND MEEKNESS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND THY RIGHT HAND SHALL TEACH THEE TERRIBLE THINGS. THINE ARROWS ARE SHARP IN THE HEART OF THE KING'S ENEMIES WHEREBY THE PEOPLE FALL UNDER THEE.

In these words the psalmist, led by the Spirit of truth, addresses Jesus Christ, the great Captain of our salvation, to whom, as we learn from St. Paul, this psalm refers. In the first verse, the inspired author describes the state of his mind, when he began to pen it. My heart, says he, is inditing a good matter; I speak of the things, which I have made touching the king; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. But before he could proceed farther, the illustrious personage, who was the subject of his meditations, seems to have revealed himself to his enraptured mind, resplendent in glory, and pre-eminent in beauty; so that, instead of speaking of him, as he had intended, he felt constrained to address him as present; and cries out in an ecstacy of admiration and love, Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God hath blessed thee forever. The exquisite pleasure, which he felt, while contemplating this delightful vision, and speaking

the praises of his Redeemer, naturally excited in his heart the most fervent desires, that Christ's kingdom might be extended; and that others might be conquered by his grace, and brought to know one, whose presence produced such fulness of joy. Hence he cries out, in the language of our text, Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of meekness and truth and righteousness, and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. His benevolent prayer was no sooner uttered, than with the prophetic eye of faith he saw it answered. He saw this Lord of his affections, this object of his admiration, this subject of his praises, riding forth through the world in the chariot of his salvation, conquering and to conquer; and exultingly cries, Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of thine enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.

My professing friends, no man was ever favored with a view of the glory and beauty of Christ, without feeling emotions and desires similar to those here expressed by the psalmist, without being constrained to pray, as he does, in our text, for the exertion and the triumph of his all-conquering grace. For it is impossible to contemplate such a being, and to know the joy, which his presence gives, without ardently desiring, that others, and especially our acquaintance and friends, may share in our joys. And should he be pleased to favor any of us with such views of himself, now we are

assembled professedly to pray for the effusions of his grace, and to commemorate his dying love, we shall find no language better suited to express our feelings and desires, than that, which is employed by the psalmist in our text. Let us, then, consider the *import* of the language, the *reasons*, why he employed it, and the *happy effects*, which are witnessed, when the petitions contained in it are answered.

I. The first thing which deserves our attention in this prayer of the psalmist, is the *appellation*, by which he addresses Christ, O thou Most Mighty. He had, in the preceding verse, celebrated the pre-eminent beauty and loveliness of his person; Thou art fairer than the children of men. He had also noticed his grace and mercy, as a mediator, displayed in the invitations and promises, which he uttered; Grace is poured into thy lips. But as he was now about to pray for an exertion of his power, he addresses him by a corresponding appellation, and calls him Most Mighty.

The propriety of this appellation will not be questioned, when we consider that with respect to his divine nature, Christ is the Mighty God; the Lord Jehovah, in whose arm dwells everlasting strength. Nor is it less applicable to him considered as mediator. In this character he is Immanuel, God with us; and as such is mighty to conquer, and mighty to save. He is mighty to conquer; for he has led captivity captive; he has conquered sin, and death, and hell—the three most

formidable enemies, that ever assailed the happiness of men, or the throne of God; enemies, who have repeatedly foiled, and who laugh to scorn all power short of omnipotence. Nor is he less mighty to save; for he has saved millions from the most awful fate, in the most desperate circumstances. He says of himself, I am he that speaketh in righteousness, mighty to save. So say all the inspired writers. In a word, all power in heaven and earth, is his; and he is able to save, even to the uttermost.

Let us next consider the import of the *petition*, which the psalmist presents to this Most Mighty of beings. It is, in brief, that he would exert his might, or the power of his grace, for the conversion and salvation of sinners. For this purpose, he prays,

1. That he would arm himself with the necessary weapons; Gird on thy sword. Christ has a sword of justice, and a sword of grace; a sword of justice, to cut off incorrigible offenders; and a sword of grace, to subdue his chosen people, and make them willing in the day of his power. It is the latter, which the psalmist here wishes him to gird on; and this is his word; for, says the apostle, the sword of the Spirit is the word of God. Agreeably, when St. John beheld him in vision in the midst of his churches, he saw a sharp two edged sword proceeding out of his mouth. It is with propriety, that this word is compared to such a weapon; for the apostle informs us, that it is quick,

or living, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and laying open the thoughts and intents of the heart.

It must be observed, however, that this description of the word of God is applicable to it, only when Christ girds it on, and employs it as his sword. Of what use is a sword, even though it be the sword of Goliath, while it lies still in its scabbard, or is grasped by the powerless hand of an infant? In those circumstances it can neither conquer, nor defend, however well suited it might be to do both, in the hand of a warrior. It is the same with the sword of the Spirit. While it lies still in its scabbard, or is wielded only by the infantile hand of Christ's ministers, it is a powerless and useless weapon; a weapon, at which the weakest sinner can laugh, and against which he can defend himself with the utmost ease. But not so when he, who is Most Mighty, girds it on. Then it becomes a weapon of tremendous power, a weapon resistless as the bolt of heaven. Is not my word like a fire, and a hammer, saith the Lord, which breaketh the rock in pieces? It is indeed; for what can be more efficacious and irresistible, than a weapon sharper than a two edged sword, wielded by the arm of omnipotence? What must his sword be whose glance is the lightning? Armed with this weapon, the Captain of our salvation cuts his way to the sinner with infinite ease, though surrounded

by rocks and mountains, scatters his strong holds, and refuges of lies, and, with a mighty blow, cleaves asunder his heart of adamant, and lays him prostrate and trembling at his feet. Since such are the effects of this weapon in the hand of Christ, it is with the utmost propriety, that the psalmist begins by requesting him to gird it on, and not suffer it to be inactive in its scabbard, or powerless in the feeble grasp of his ministers.

2. The psalmist petitions Christ to go arrayed in his glory and majesty; that glory and majesty, with which he then saw him to be clothed. Feeling himself deeply impressed and affected by the view of this glory and majesty, he could not but hope, that the displays of it would produce similar effects upon others. As if he had said, Lord, thy glorious perfections and awful majesty subdue, overwhelm, dazzle, and delight me, and fill my soul with admiration, reverence and love; go then, I beseech thee, and display them to others; and they will feel constrained to submit to thee, as I have been, and to acknowledge that thou art fairer than the children of men, the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.

But in what do the glory and majesty of Christ consist? I answer,—glory is the display, or manifestation of excellency. Now Christ is possessed of excellencies or perfections of various kinds; he has some excellencies, which belong to him as God; some, which belong to him as man, and some, which are peculiar to him as God and man

united in one person. Of course, he has a threefold glory. His glory, as God, consists in a display of the infinite perfections and excellencies of his nature. This glory he possessed with his Father before the world was. His glory, as man, consists in the perfect holiness of his heart and life. His glory, as God and man united in one person, the mediator, consists in his perfect fitness, or suitableness to perform all those works, which the office of mediator requires of him. This is the glory, of which St. John speaks, We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. This is the glory in which Christ appears, when he goes forth to subdue sinners to himself; and this, therefore, is the glory which is meant in our text. If it be asked, in what this glory more particularly consists, I answer,—it consists in a fulness or sufficiency of every excellence and perfection necessary to qualify him for the all important office of mediator between God and man; every thing, which is necessary, either to satisfy the justice and honor of God, or to excite and justify the utmost love, admiration, and confidence of man. Now all this Christ possesses in perfection. He possesses every thing necessary to satisfy the justice and secure the honor of God; for he has once and again declared, by a voice from heaven, that in him, or with him, he is ever well pleased. He also possesses every thing necessary to excite, encourage, and justify the highest love, admiration, and confidence of sinful men; for in

him all fulness dwells, even all the fulness of the Godhead. There is in him a fulness of truth, to enlighten sinners, and lead them to believe in him; for in him are hidden all the treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge. He has also a fulness of grace, to pardon, sanctify, and save them; for the riches of his grace are unsearchable. Now the display or manifestation of this infinite fulness of grace and truth constitutes the glory, in which the psalmist wished Christ to appear. He wished him also to appear in his majesty. The difference between majesty and glory consists in this; glory is something, which belongs either to the person or the character of a being; but majesty is more properly an attribute of office, especially of the regal office. This office Christ sustains. He is exalted to be a Prince, as well as a Saviour; he is King of kings and Lord of lords; and it is principally in his character of a king, that he subdues his enemies, and dispenses pardon. The psalmist, therefore, wished him to appear in this character, arrayed in all his awful majesty, that while his glory excited admiration, and delight, and love, his majesty might produce reverential awe, and lead sinners to submission and obedience.

In the next place, the psalmist prays, that being thus armed with his powerful sword, and arrayed in his glory and majesty, Christ would ride forth through the world, conquering and to conquer. In thy majesty ride prosperously. There is in these words an evident allusion to the manner, in which

monarchs were, in those days, accustomed to go forth to battle. Arrayed in dazzling armor, and adorned with all the ensigns of royal dignity, they ascended a splendid chariot and rode forth at the head of their armies, to assist friendly, or subdue hostile nations. In a similar manner the psalmist wishes Christ, the Captain of our salvation, to go forth, to deliver his people and destroy his enemies; and in the same word prays for and predicts his success.

A most striking description of him, as going forth in this manner, we have in the revelation of St. John. I saw heaven opened, said he, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true; and in righteousness doth he judge, and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, which no one knew but himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies of heaven followed him, clothed in fine linen white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. With a similar view of our Redeemer the prophet Isaiah was favored, when he cried, Who is this that cometh from Edom, with died garments from Bozrah;

this that is glorious in his apparel travelling in the greatness of his strength? It is I, the Saviour answers, I, that speaketh in righteousness, mighty to save. Such is the glorious personage, whom the psalmist here addresses, such the manner, in which he wished him to go forth to war.

II. We proceed now to consider the *reasons*, why the psalmist wished the Saviour to go forth prosperously, and the cause, in which he wished him to engage. Do this because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness. This passage may be taken in two different senses, and it is rather doubtful which was in the mind of the psalmist. He might perhaps intend the truth, meekness, and righteousness of Christ himself; for all these qualities belong to him in the highest degree. He is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the way, the truth, and the life; and when he goes forth to battle, righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness, or truth, the girdle of his reins.

Meekness is also an eminent characteristic of Christ. Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly in heart. Nor is he less distinguished for righteousness. We have seen in the passage already quoted, that he is one, who speaks in righteousness; and that in righteousness he doth judge and make war; and the prophet Isaiah informs us, that, as a king, he shall rule in righteousness, and with righteousness judge the poor. If we suppose this to be the meaning of the psalmist, we must

understand him as assigning, in these words, the reason why he wished and prayed for the success of the Saviour in his glorious expedition. Mayest thou ride prosperously, because thou art true, and meek, and righteous; and, therefore, deservest the victory. Or,

2. By meekness, truth, and righteousness, the Psalmist might mean these qualities in the abstract; and if this be his meaning, we must understand him as specifying the cause in which he wished Immanuel to engage. He saw that meekness, truth, and righteousness, were in a great measure banished from the world; that the few, who loved and exercised these virtues, were despised and oppressed, and that error, falsehood, violence, and injustice almost universally prevailed. In a word, he saw what the prophet so feelingly describes and laments. Men, says he, sin in transgressing and lying against the Lord; speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth, and he that forsaketh evil maketh himself a prey. For this wretched state of things the psalmist saw there was no remedy but in the success of his arms, whose kingdom consists in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and whose design it is, to save all the meek of the earth. Hence, as a lover of goodness, and a friend to mankind, he wished and prayed that

the great Deliverer might ride forth prosperously, diffusing truth, and meekness, and righteousness through the land.

III. To enforce his petition, the psalmist predicts the *certain success*, which would attend Messiah, if he thus rode forth to battle. Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things; that is, thou shalt know experimentally what terrible things thy power can perform. Hence the church is represented as saying, By terrible things in righteousness shalt thou answer us, O God of our salvation. By these terrible things are intended,

1. The destruction, with which he shall overwhelm his incorrigible enemies. This destruction the prophet Isaiah described, when he saw him in vision returning from battle and victory. Why, he exclaims, art thou red in thine apparel, and why are thy garments like his, that treadeth the wine vat? Because, he answers, because, I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I have trodden them down in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury, and their blood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. This was fulfilled, when he so terribly destroyed his incorrigible enemies, the Jews, agreeably to his own predictions. It was fulfilled, when he no less terribly overthrew pagan, persecuting Rome, and other nations, that conspired against his church. It is still fulfilled in the destruction of all, who obstinately reject his offered grace, and refuse to submit to his authority;

and it will be still more signally fulfilled in the awful day, when he shall say, Those mine enemies, that would not have me to reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.

2. There are also many terrible things which attend, or rather precede, the conquest of those, whom he makes willing to be his people in the day of his power. He sends his Spirit to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and judgment; sets his terrors in dreadful array round about them; causes the flaming curse of his broken law to pursue them, pierces the conscience, and cleaves asunder their hearts with his sharp two edged sword, beats down their fancied strength to the earth, and often brings them to the very verge of despair, before they submit, and cry for mercy. That these are terrible things indeed to the awakened sinner, none who have suffered thus need be told; and such are the terrible things, which the right hand or power of Christ performs, when he rides forth to battle, as the Captain of salvation.

Lastly—While thus beseeching the Redeemer to ride forth prosperously, and predicting his success, he seems suddenly to have seen his prayers answered, and his predictions fulfilled. He saw his all conquering Prince gird on his resistless sword; array himself in glory and majesty; ascend the chariot of his gospel, display the banner of his cross, and ride forth, as on the wings of the wind, while the tremendous voice of a herald proclaimed before him, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;

exalt the valleys, and level the hills; make the crooked ways straight, and the rough places plain; for, behold, the Lord God comes; he comes with a strong hand; his reward is with him, and his work before him. From the bright and fiery cloud which enveloped his chariot, and concealed it from mortal eyes, he saw sharp arrows of conviction, shot forth on every side, deeply wounding the obdurate hearts of sinners, and prostrating them in crowds around his path, while his right hand extended raised them again, and healed the wounds which his arrows had made; and his omnipotent voice spoke peace to their despairing souls, and bade them follow in his train, and witness and share in his triumph. From the same bright cloud he saw the vengeful lightnings, flashing thick and dreadful, to blast and consume every thing that opposed his progress; he saw sin, and death, and hell with all its legions, baffled, defeated, and flying in trembling consternation before him; he saw them overtaken, bound, and chained to his triumphant chariot wheels; while enraptured voices were heard from heaven exclaiming, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ. Such was the scene, which seems to have burst upon the ravished sight of the entranced prophet; transported with the view, he exclaims, Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of thine enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.

And, my friends, permit me to add, that similar

scenes, though on a smaller scale, are witnessed by the eye of faith in every place, through which Christ now rides invisibly in the chariot of his salvation. Then the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, which, in the feeble hands of his ministers, had long seemed like a sword rusting in its scabbard, or grasped by an infant, becomes a weapon of resistless energy. Then the arrows of conviction, which had been vainly aimed, and feebly sent, are guided between the joints of the harness, and sinners feel them quivering in their hearts. Then the obdurate and incorrigible enemies of Christ are either laid low by the stroke of death, or blasted and seared by the lightnings of his vengeance, and left like a withered oak, on which the bolt of heaven has fallen, to stand naked and barren, till the appointed time for cutting them down and casting them into the fire! Then truth, and meekness, and righteousness, which had long seemed dead, revive, and ignorance, falsehood, and unrighteousness, are compelled to fly. Then the bonds of sin are burst; Satan is unable to retain his captives; death and the grave lose their terrors; joyful acclamations are heard in heaven, celebrating the return of penitent sinners; and crowds of those, whom Christ's arrows have wounded, and his right hand healed again, are seen flocking around his chariot, shouting the praises, and extolling the triumphs of their great Deliverer; while those, who, like the psalmist, have been praying and waiting for his appearance join

in the song, and exultingly cry, Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of thine enemies, whereby the people fall under thee.

And now, if such are the blessed effects of Christ's presence, when he rides forth prosperously, who, that ever saw his glory, can forbear exclaiming with the psalmist, Gird on thy sword, O Most Mighty, and in thy majesty ride prosperously! And are there not now special reasons to hope, that this prayer will be answered? nay, that Christ has already begun to answer it? Has he not begun, in more than one heart, to give power and energy to his long inactive sword? Has he not begun to shew himself in his glory and majesty to some of his mourning, waiting people among us? Has not the voice of his herald been heard exclaiming, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in this desert a high way for our God? Do not some parts of this town begin to shake under the weight of his thundering chariot wheels, and do not his arrows of conviction begin to fly thick around, causing some of the people, who have hitherto been his enemies, to fall before him? Do not some of you, my hearers, already feel these arrows sharp in your hearts, and does not his word, which has long assailed you in vain, like a sword that had lost its edge, now begin to cut deep, to wound your consciences and lay open your hearts? Yes, my friends, we know, and you know, that these tokens of the approach of his presence begin to be seen and felt. Yes, let his church

hear and be glad; let his enemies hear and tremble; he comes, our Prince, our Saviour, our Deliverer comes, riding gloriously in the chariot of salvation; comes to bless his people with peace; comes to do terrible things, and make bare his omnipotent arm. And how do you intend to meet this majestic Prince, the King of glory, this illustrious conqueror, should he visit you? Will you meet him as an enemy or as a friend? Will you fall under his arrows of conviction, or be blasted by the lightnings of his vengeance? Alas, at present many of you can meet him only as enemies. His mark is not instamped on your foreheads; his protecting blood is not sprinkled upon the door posts of your houses, to prevent the entrance of the destroying angel. There is no altar for prayer erected in your families, to distinguish you from the heathen, who call not upon his name, and upon whom, we are told, his fury will be poured out. Nay, you have not even a seat at his table, to serve as a visible token that you acknowledge him for your friend. Soon will many of you crowd away from him, though one would think you should tremble lest he meet you at the door and ask, why you thus fly from the table of your Maker and Redeemer. But though now his enemies, it is not too late to become his friends. One great object, on which he goes forth in his chariot of salvation, is to convert his enemies into friends. O, then, seek to be found in this happy number. Cry to him in all the anxiety of alarm, Lord, bend

thy course towards me, plant one of thy sharp, but salutary arrows in my flinty heart, that I may fall under thee, and become one of thy people in this day of thy power. And let those, who already feel his arrows in their hearts, beware how they endeavor to extract them, or permit any hand to do it but his own. To those, who will apply to no other physician, he will in due time return to heal their wounds, and speak peace to their consciences. But remember the time is short. Soon will the Saviour be gone, and then he that is unjust, must remain unjust still, and he that is filthy, must be filthy still. Now, in a peculiar manner, is the accepted time, and day of salvation. And we, my Christian friends, how shall we receive our Prince and Saviour, should he visit this place? What shall we, what can we render to him, who has remembered us in our low estate, and returned to visit us with his salvation? What indeed, but that offering, which he prizes above all others, a broken and contrite heart? Bring to him such a heart. Shew him the scars, which his arrows of love formerly made in it. Remind him and yourselves of the memorable time, when he come to heal the wound, and speak peace to your consciences. Let every heart which he has thus wounded and healed, prepare him room. Let every voice, which he has tuned to join in the hallelujahs of heaven, be now heard celebrating his perfections, and praying for his speedy and universal triumph.

SERMON XIV.

SINNERS ENTREATED TO HEAR GOD'S VOICE.

HEBREWS III. 7, 8.

THE HOLY GHOST SAITH, TO DAY IF YE WILL HEAR HIS VOICE, HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.

My brethren, I can think of no introduction to a discourse on this awakening passage more suitable, than that often repeated command of our Saviour, He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith. You are here told what the Spirit saith. The Holy Ghost saith,—To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. To sinners of all ages, in all situations, of all descriptions, to every one, who hath an ear to hear, or a heart to be hardened, the Holy Ghost saith, To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

The import of this language is so obvious as to need little explanation. It requires us to hear God's voice; to hear it, not merely with the external ear, but with appropriate feelings of heart, with faith, love, and obedience. It commands us to do this to-day, immediately, without the smallest delay. The import of the language is, if you ever mean to hear God's voice, if you do not intend to die without obeying it, you must hear it now. And what is the voice of God, which we are thus commanded to hear immediately? It is that voice, which

says respecting Jesus Christ, This is my beloved Son, hear him; that voice, which now commandeth all men, every where, to repent; that voice, which says to every child of Adam, My son, give me thine heart; come ye out from an unbelieving world, and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. The import of all these passages is, be truly religious, and if you intend ever to be so, become so to-day; while yet it is called to-day, repent and believe the gospel.

This, then, is the great duty enjoined in our text, the command which we are now to enforce. But when God speaks to men; when the Creator speaks to his creatures; when the King eternal speaks to his lawful subjects, and the Holy Ghost saith, hear his voice and harden not your hearts against him, can it be necessary to urge upon you the duty of immediately obeying his commands? Alas, my friends, that it should be necessary. But necessary as it is, it will be in vain to attempt it, unless divine grace incline you to obey. O, then, that the God, whose voice you are commanded to hear, and the Holy Spirit, who now commands you to hear it, may be present in his powerful influence, while I attempt to enforce upon you an immediate compliance with his commands, to press home upon your consciences the reasons, the motives, which should induce you to become religious to-day.

Before I proceed to do this let me state, partic-

ularly, whom I mean to address. It is not the fool, who says in his heart, there is no God. It is not the profane scoffer, who, disbelieving the scriptures, sneeringly asks, Where is the promise of his coming? It is not he, who, having already presumptuously hardened his heart against the truth, has been given over by the righteous judgment of God to strong delusions, to believe a lie. Such characters, if any such are present, I must leave, where they have wilfully thrown themselves, in the hands of that God, who is a consuming fire, who has declared, that he will deal with incorrigible offenders. It is the young, who are not hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; it is those, who, rationally convinced of the truth and importance of religion, intend at some future period to embrace it; those, whose consciences, not yet seared as with an hot iron, sometimes cause them to tremble, as did Felix, when they hear of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come; but who, like the same Felix, are postponing a compliance with their convictions to some more convenient season. Such are the characters, whom I now address, and upon whom I would press the importance, the necessity, of immediately becoming religious.

The *first* motive, which I shall set before you with this view, is the shortness and uncertainty of life. I urge you to become religious to-day, because you are not sure of to-morrow; because to-day is, perhaps, the only opportunity, with which you will ever be favored. Need I enter upon a

labored proof of this truth? Need I remind you, that you are mortal, that it is appointed to all men once to die? Does not the tolling bell almost daily remind you of this? Do you not see your fellow mortals borne, in rapid succession, to their long home, while the mourners go about your streets? Need I tell you, that you are frail, as well as mortal; that you must not only die, but may die soon and suddenly; that the time allotted you, when longest, is short, and may prove much shorter than you are aware; that many are swept into eternity, as in a moment, by unexpected casualties? and that those, who fall victims to diseases, are in perfect health the day, nay, the hour, before it assails them; and that, of course, the full possession of health, to-day, is no proof that you will not be assailed by fatal disease to-morrow? Who, let me ask, are the persons, that die suddenly and unexpectedly? Are they the feeble, the infirm? No, my hearers; observation will tell you, that they are the youthful, the vigorous, the strong. She will tell you, that, while the former, like a reed, bend before the blast and escape, the latter, like the stubborn oak, brave its fury, and are prostrated. She will tell you, and the physician will confirm her remark, that those, who enjoy the most vigorous health, are most exposed to many of those diseases, which arrest their victims by surprise, and cut short the thread of life, as in a moment. Such is the wise appointment of him, in whose hands is our breath, that none may be tempted to abuse

their health and vigor, by drawing from them encouragement to postpone preparation for death. Will you, then, frustrate the design of this appointment? Will you boast of to-morrow, as if it were your own, when you know not what a day may bring forth? You would pity and condemn the madness of a man, who should stake his whole fortune on the turn of a die, without the smallest prospect of gain. But, my delaying hearers, you are playing a far more dreadful and desperate game than this. You are staking your souls, your salvation on the continuance of life; on an event as uncertain, as the turn of the die. You stake them without any equivalent; for if life should be spared, you gain nothing; but should it be cut short, you lose all, you are ruined for eternity. You run the risk of losing every thing dear, and of incurring everlasting misery—for what? For the sake of living a little longer without religion, of spending a few more days or years in disobeying and offending your Creator, of committing sins, which you know must be repented of. And is it wise, rather is it not madness, to incur such a risk? Let the following case furnish the reply. I will suppose that you intend to defer the commencement of a religious life for one year only. Select, then, the most healthy, vigorous person of your acquaintance; the man, whose prospects are fairest for long life, and say, whether you would be willing to stake your soul on the chance of that man's life continuing for a year? Would you be willing to

say, I consent to forfeit salvation, to be miserable forever, if that man dies before the expiration of a year? There is not, I presume, a single person present, who would not shudder at the thought of entering into such an engagement, if he supposed it would be binding.—My delaying hearers, if you would not stake your salvation on the continuance of any other person's life, why will you stake it on the continuance of your own? Yet this you evidently do, when you resolve to defer repentance to a future period; for if you die before that period arrives you die impenitent, unprepared, and perish forever. O, then, play no longer this desperate game; a game, in which millions have staked and lost their souls; but if you intend ever to become religious, begin to-day, for to-morrow is not.

Permit me to enforce these remarks by an instance in point. A person, who formerly met with you in this house, while in the full enjoyment of youth and health, became convinced of the importance of religion; and expressed a determination to attend the next weekly meeting for religious inquiry. When the day of meeting arrived, she, however, concluded to defer her attendance till the following week. But, before the close of that week, she was in her grave.—It is not for us to limit the divine mercy, or to say what was her fate; but, for aught we can tell, the delay of a week proved fatal. Permit me to remind you of another circumstance, which many of you will recollect. I observed to you on the Sabbath, I think the first

Sabbath of a year, that perhaps some person might then be present in God's house for the last time. The event verified the peradventure. On the following Wednesday, one, who had been present on the Sabbath, was dead. At the ensuing Thursday evening lecture, I noticed the circumstance, and repeatod the remark. Again was it verified. Before the next Sabbath, a person, who had been present at that lecture, was a corpse. On the next Sabbath, I mentioned this also, and repeated the remark a third time; and the following day, a third person, who, on the Sabbath, was in perfect health, expired. My hearers, what has occurred, may occur again. No person now before me can be sure, that he will be permitted to revisit this house of prayer. If, then, you intend ever to become religious, begin to-day, for to-morrow is not.

This remark suggests a *second* reason, why you should not postpone religion to another day. You cannot properly, or even lawfully, promise to give what is not your own. Now to-morrow is not yours; and it is yet uncertain whether it ever will be. To day is the only time which you can, with the least shadow of propriety, call your own. To day, then, is the only time, which you can properly or lawfully give to God. To promise that you will give him to-morrow, or which is the same thing, to resolve that you will become religious to-morrow, is to promise what is not yours, and what may never be yours to give. If then, God deserves any thing at your hands, if you mean to give him

any thing, give him what is your own, and do not mock him and deceive yourselves, by promising to give him what you do not possess, and what you may never possess. If you adopt a different course, and postpone the commencement of a religious life till to-morrow, you will, in effect, say, all the time, that is mine to give, I will give to sin and the world; but that time, which is not mine, and which I have no right or power to give, I will give to God.

A *third* reason why you should commence a religious life to-day, is, that if you defer it, though but till to-morrow, you must harden your hearts against the voice of God. This our text plainly intimates. It excludes the idea of any middle course between obeying God's voice to-day, and hardening our hearts; and affirms, of course, that all, who neglect to do the former, will do the latter. Every sinner present, then, who does not become religious to-day, will harden his own heart. This is evident also from the very nature of things. God commands and exhorts you to commence immediately, a religious life. Now if you do not comply, you must refuse, for there is no medium. Here then is a direct, wilful act of disobedience to God's commands; and this act tends most powerfully to harden the heart; for after we have once disobeyed, it becomes more easy to repeat the disobedience. But this is not all. If you disobey, you must assign some excuse to justify your disobedience, or your consciences will reproach you,

and render you uneasy; if no plausible excuse occurs, you will seek one. If none can readily be found, you will invent one. And when God proceeds to enforce his commands by frowns and threatenings, and to press you with motives and arguments, you must fortify your minds against their influence, and seek other arguments to assist you in doing it. This also tends most powerfully to harden the heart. A man, who is frequently employed in seeking arguments and excuses to justify his neglect of religion, soon becomes expert in the work of self justification. He is, if I may so express it, armed at all points against the truth; so that in a little time, nothing affects him, no arrow from the quiver of revelation can reach his conscience. Urge him to what duty you will, he has some plausible excuse in readiness to justify himself for neglecting to perform it. But if, as is sometimes the case, his excuses prove insufficient, and his understanding and conscience become convinced, that he ought to hear God's voice to-day, he can avoid compliance only by taking refuge in an obstinate refusal, or by resolutely diverting his attention to some other object, till God's commands are forgotten, or by a vague kind of promise that he will become religious at some future period. Whichsoever of these methods he adopts, the present impression is effaced, and his heart is hardened. He has engaged in a warfare with his reason and conscience, and has gained a victory over them. He has resisted the force of truth, and thus rendered

it more easy for him to resist it again. In a word, he has less religious sensibility ; he has become more inaccessible to conviction, and less disposed to yield to it, than before. Now this is, precisely, what the Scriptures mean by hardening the heart. And this, my delaying hearers, is what you must do, what you will do, unless you become religious to-day. God now commands and exhorts you to repent, and places before you many powerful motives and arguments to induce you to obey. If you do not yield to him, you must resist him. You must, if I may so express it, brace up your minds and hearts against the force of the means which he employs to persuade you. Your spirits must resist and strive against his. Of course, you will leave this house more hardened than you entered it ; salvation will be placed farther from you, and your conversion will be rendered more improbable than ever. O, then, if you intend ever to hear God's voice, hear it to-day, and do not, by hardening yourselves against it, render it a source of death unto death to your souls. As a farther inducement to this, permit me to remark,

First—that if you do not commence a religious life to-day, there is great reason to fear that you will never commence it. This is a most important, as well as a most alarming truth ; and could I persuade you to believe it, I should feel strong hopes, that you would comply with the exhortation in our text; for I venture to assert, that there is no one thing, which encourages you to neglect religion to

day, so much as a secret hope, that you shall become religious at some future time. Could this delusive hope be destroyed, could you be made to feel, that your eternal salvation depends on your becoming religious to-day, you would scarcely postpone it till to-morrow. Permit me then to attempt the destruction of this hope, by showing you how groundless it is, and how many circumstances combine to render it probable, that, if you do not hear God's voice to-day, you never will hear it. With this view, I remark, that the very causes, which induce you to defer the commencement of a religious life, render it highly improbable, that you will ever become religious. When this duty is urged upon you, you allege, perhaps, that you are not able to become religious, or that you cannot give your minds to it; or that you have not sufficient time for it, or you know not how to begin. Now all these causes will operate with equal force another day. You will then feel just as unable, or, to speak more properly, just as unwilling to become religious, as you do now. When to-morrow arrives you will, therefore, probably defer repentance to some future time; when that time arrives, you will again defer it; and will continue to pursue this course till life is spent. Would the work be rendered more easy by delay, there might be some appearance of a reason for deferring it. But it will not. On the contrary, every day's delay will render it more difficult. Your hearts, as you have already been reminded, will to-morrow be more

hard and insensible than they are now; your sinful habits also will be more confirmed; your consciences will be less tender; you will be less susceptible of religious impressions; in a word, you will have greater difficulties to overcome, and less disposition to contend with them, than you have to-day. It is, therefore, exceedingly improbable, that those who neglect religion to-day, will attend to it to-morrow.

There is another circumstance, which renders this improbability still greater. The inspired writers teach us, very explicitly, that, after a time, God ceases to strive with sinners, and to afford them the assistance of his grace. He gives them up to a blinded mind, a seared conscience, and a hard heart. Thus he dealt with the inhabitants of the old world. Thus he dealt with the wicked sons of Eli. They hearkened not to the voice of their father, says the inspired historian, because the Lord would slay them. That is, God had determined, in consequence of their wickedness, to destroy them, and, therefore, he did not accompany the warnings of their father with his blessing. Thus he dealt with the Jews in the time of the prophet Isaiah, Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. The same terrible punishment was inflicted on the inhabitants of Jerusalem in our Saviour's time. He beheld the city, we are told, and wept over it, saying, O, that thou hadst known, even thou, at least

in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes! This passage very clearly intimates, that there is a time, when sinners may know the things of their peace; but that, if they suffer that time to pass without improving it, the things of their peace will then be hidden from them, and their destruction will be sure. Hence the apostle exhorts us, in the context, to take warning from the fate of the Jews, who hardened their hearts against God's voice, and thus provoked him to swear in his wrath, that they should not enter his rest. Hence, also, he informs us, that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; thus plainly intimating, that to-morrow the day of salvation may be past. If then you, my delaying hearers, harden your hearts to-day, God may seal them up in impenetrable hardness to-morrow. If you say, I will not embrace the offers of salvation to-day, God will say, No offers of salvation shall be made you to-morrow. Nor is there small reason to fear this; for of all the sins, which men can commit, perhaps no one is more provoking to God, than that of refusing immediately to hear his voice. It is a direct and wilful act of rebellion against his authority; it is a sin committed against light and conviction; it is resisting and grieving the Holy Spirit; it is crucifying Jesus Christ afresh; it is practically saying, I know that I must, at some period of life, become religious. It is true death may surprise me, or God may deny his grace, and leave me to perish, if

I delay; but I choose to encounter this danger, to incur the risk of losing everlasting happiness and of suffering eternal misery, rather than hear God's voice to-day. I will therefore, once more, harden myself against it; I will again trifle with his commands, again make light of my Saviour's invitations and walk a little longer in the broad road, sit awhile longer on the crumbling brink of perdition. This, O delaying sinner, is the plain language of thy conduct. Thus strong is the aversion which it expresses to religion, to the service of God. That he must be exceedingly displeased with such a course, must be obvious to your own mind. You have then, great reason to fear, that your day of grace has almost expired, that God will soon swear in his wrath you shall never enter his rest. How groundless must be your hopes of a future conversion; how small the probability, that, if you refuse to hear God's voice to-day, you will ever become religious. You ought to feel as if this were the only accepted time, as if your day of grace would end with the setting sun, as if all eternity depended on the present hour, on your immediate obedience to the voice of God.

But once more, setting aside, for a moment, all that has been said, suppose that you could be sure of long life, sure of repenting at some future period, it would still be the dictate of wisdom, as it is of revelation, to become religious to-day. You expect, if you ever do become religious, to repent of all your past sins; for you well know, that, without

repentance, there is no pardon, no true religion ; of course, if by postponing religion to-day, you resolve to commit a few more sins, you expect to repent of those sins. You are then, while you delay, constantly making work for repentance ; you are doing what you mean to be sorry for ; you are building up to-day, what you mean to throw down to-morrow. How irrational and absurd is this! How foolish, how ridiculous, does a rational, immortal being appear, when he says, I mean to omit some duty, or commit some sin to-day, but I will be very sorry for it to-morrow. I will not now hear God's voice, but I mean to mourn, to be grieved for it hereafter. My hearers, could you say this to your fellow creatures without blushing? How then can you, without shame, say it to God by your actions? What sincerity can there be in such promises? How can a man sincerely resolve, that he will to-morrow repent of conduct, which he loves and chooses to-day! It cannot be. There is not, therefore, the smallest sincerity in the delaying sinner's resolutions of future repentance and amendment. He has no real intention to become religious at any future period of his life ; and all his promises are designed merely to quiet his conscience, and prevent her from disturbing him in his sinful pursuits. In every point of view, then, it clearly appears to be your duty, your wisdom, your interest, to become religious to-day.

Thus have I stated some of the reasons, which should induce you to commence, immediately, a

religious life. To crown all, permit me to remind you, that it is the express command of God. God now commandeth all men, every where, to repent; and the Holy Ghost saith, obey God's command, hear his voice to-day, and do not harden your hearts against it. This command, O sinner, I lay as a terror across thy path. You cannot proceed one step farther in an irreligious course, without trampling it under foot; without practically saying, God now commands me to repent, but I will not repent; the Holy Ghost saith, hear his voice to-day, but to-day I will not hear it. If to-morrow's rising sun finds you out of the narrow way of life, it will find you where God expressly forbids you to be, on pain of incurring his severest displeasure. He has said, rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as idolatry; and if you disobey his voice to-day, you will be guilty both of rebellion and of stubbornness. We might almost venture to say, it would scarcely be more sinful to go away and commit murder, than to go away and defer repentance, for why is murder a sin? Because, you will reply, God has said, Thou shalt not kill. And has not the same God said, with equal clearness, Repent now, and believe the gospel? To violate this command then, is no less a direct act of rebellion against God, than it would be to take the life of a fellow creature. And will you, can you, dare you, then, be guilty of it? Have any of you already reached such a pitch of impiety and wickedness, as to dare trample on a known command of God,

to commit known, wilful, deliberate sin, when he has assured us, that, if we sin wilfully, after we have received a knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation? My friends, if any of you dare do this, it is too late to exhort you not to harden your hearts; for they are hardened to the utmost already. I am, however, aware, that you will not see, or, at least, will not acknowledge this to be the case. I am aware, that you always have many excuses in readiness, to prove that you are not guilty of wilful disobedience. But what will these excuses avail at the last day? They may serve to quiet your consciences, to harden your hearts and buoy you up with deceitful hopes now; but they will answer no purpose then; nay, you will not then dare to offer them; for God has declared that every mouth shall be stopped. Besides, you cannot find a single instance in the Bible, in which God has ever paid the smallest regard to the excuses of sinners. We read of some, who, when they were invited, as you now are, to the gospel feast, began, with one consent, to make excuse. And what was the consequence? God declared that not one of them should taste it. We read of another, who attempted to excuse himself by pretending that he was not able to do what his Lord required. And what was his Lord's reply to this excuse? Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. This, I presume, is the excuse which most of you

are now secretly making. You are saying, I do not become religious to-day, because I am not able; and I must wait till God assists me. Of all the excuses, that sinners can make, this is the most foolish, the most groundless, the most provoking to God. If you can make no better excuse than this, you had much better make none, and say at once, I will not obey God. Groundless and impious, however, as this excuse is, I would pay it some attention, did you really believe it yourselves. But you do not believe it. The resolutions and promises, which you often secretly make, that you will repent to-morrow, or on your dying bed, prove that you do not believe it; for none ever resolves or promises to do what he knows he cannot do. These promises and resolutions, then, show, that you suppose yourselves able to repent.

There is another fact, which shews, still more clearly, that you do not really believe this excuse. When any important event, an event, which nearly concerns your present interests, is in suspense, you always feel anxious. If you have no control over the event, you feel more anxious. You cannot rest till it is decided. Suppose, for instance, that your property, your reputation, or your lives, depended on the verdict of a jury, over which you had no control. You would not say, while they were deliberating, it will avail nothing for me to be anxious; I will therefore feel easy and unconcerned. You could not feel unconcerned; you would be anxious till the decision was known. To apply these re-

marks to the case before us: You know that God now commands you to repent, and threatens you with everlasting punishment, unless you obey. You profess to believe, that you cannot obey without the assistance of his grace. At the same time you must be sensible that it is altogether uncertain whether you will ever receive this assistance; that is, altogether uncertain whether you shall not perish in your sins, as thousands do, while few find the way of life. Now if you really believed this, you would be in a state of constant anxiety, until your destiny was decided; until you knew, whether you should obtain divine assistance or not. Shall I be saved, or shall I perish? is a question, which you would be constantly and anxiously asking. But you do not now ask this question. You do not feel this anxiety. You are habitually easy and unconcerned, a demonstrative proof, that you do not believe this excuse, that you suppose salvation to be in your own power. Deceive not yourselves, then, and insult not God with an excuse, which you do not really believe, and which, if it were true, would transfer all blame from sinners to God, and prove that he alone is guilty of all the wickedness which is perpetrated by his creatures. He knows what you can do, and he does command you to become religious to-day, and you must obey, or take the consequences. It is painful, my friends, to address you in this language; but when I deliver God's message, I must deliver it plainly: I must, to the utmost of my power, apply it to your

consciences, in all its unbending, unaccomodating strictness; turn it which way we please, it will say nothing but this,—repent, or you perish. And what, after all, is there so very irksome, or disagreeable, in a religious life, that you should wish to defer its commencement? If you must begin some time, why not begin to-day? Will you reply, I know not how to begin? God's voice, if you listen to it, will inform you. It tells us, that there is a veil upon our hearts; a veil, which prevents us from discerning the path of duty; and it also tells us, that when our hearts turn to the Lord, that veil shall be taken away. Turn then to God. Go to him, as his servants, for direction, and he will teach you what you must do. If I mistake not, many of you are like Agrippa, and for a long time have been almost persuaded to be christians; but you hesitate, you linger, you dread to take the first step. Perhaps when you are just on the point of yielding to conviction, the question, what will the world, what will my companions say, occurs to you and causes you to fear. You fear to be thought serious; you dread the remarks, the ridicule, which it would draw upon you, and therefore do violence to your convictions, or lock them up in your own breast, till they die away. In this manner thousands gradually and insensibly harden their hearts, till the truth ceases to affect them. Let such remember, that the fear of man bringeth a snare, that Jesus Christ has said, Whosoever is ashamed of me, of him will I be ashamed at the last day.

If you cannot bear the reproach of men how will you bear his condemning sentence; and the everlasting shame and contempt which will follow it? It will then be known that you had serious thoughts, but that you banished them through fear of men; and sinners themselves will despise you as a coward, who did not dare do what he knew to be right. Dare then to do your duty, to obey your conscience and your God, to be religious; for you cannot be a christian in disguise. You must come out, and be separate, or God will not receive you. Take then, at once, some decided step, and let it be known what you mean to be; and you will find that this, and all the other objects of your fear, are mere shadows, and will feel ashamed that they should ever have influenced you for a moment. If your heart still lingers, press it with the command of God; press it with the dreadful consequence of offending and provoking him to forsake you; press it with the terrors of the last day, and all the awful realities of eternity. Above all, press it with the consideration, that if you ever turn to God, it must be to-day; that your soul, your salvation, your everlasting happiness, depends on your becoming religious to-day. My friends, are you not convinced that this is the case? Do you not perceive, that if you disobey, or trifle with, this solemn command, it will, it must harden your hearts; and render your conversion exceedingly improbable? Do you not perceive, that if, with this command before you, and with all these motives to obey it,

you cannot resolve to obey, you will feel still less disposed to obedience to-morrow, when the subject is forgotten, and the world, with all its cares and allurements, again rushes upon you? Be persuaded then to listen and obey, while God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit—while death, and judgment, and eternity, and heaven and hell, continually cry, to-day, to-day, hear God's voice, and harden not your hearts!

SERMON XV.

THE DIFFICULTY OF ESCAPING THE DAMNATION OF HELL.

My hearers, I am not without apprehensions, that the passage, which I have chosen for the subject of this discourse, will sound harshly in your ears; and that its first effect will be to excite, in many breasts, feelings by no means favorable to the reception of truth. But it is a passage, which was uttered by the compassionate Saviour of sinners, and I cannot, I dare not, pretend to be more merciful than he; I dare not suffer either a false tenderness, or a fear of giving offence, to prevent me from calling your attention to his words; words, which, if properly regarded, cannot fail to produce the most salutary effects. The words, to which I refer, are recorded in

MATTHEW XXIII. 33.

HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL?

This appalling question was addressed by our Lord to the scribes and pharisees. It evidently intimates that their situation was exceedingly dangerous, if not desperate;—that it was almost, if not quite, impossible for them to escape final condemnation. My impenitent hearers, I will not assert that your situation is equally dangerous, or that

your escape from the dreadful retributions of eternity is equally improbable. But the word of God will justify the assertion, and a regard to your eternal interest constrains me to assert, that your situation is exceedingly dangerous; that the obstacles, which oppose your salvation are very great and numerous; and that the improbability of your escaping the wrath to come, is by no means small. To produce in your minds a conviction of this truth, is my object in the present discourse. Could you be thoroughly convinced of it, one great obstacle, which now opposes your salvation, would be removed. So far as I have observed, nothing more effectually prevents men from flying from the wrath to come, than a groundless persuasion, that, to escape it, is easy. Nothing so much encourages men to neglect religion, as a false belief, that they can easily become religious at any time. Nothing prevents more persons from obtaining a well founded hope of salvation, than a delusive hope that they shall, some how or other, be saved. Could this delusive hope, this groundless persuasion, be destroyed; could they be made to see their real situation, and the obstacles, which oppose their escape, they would, at once, be alarmed; their false peace would be effectually disturbed, and they would begin to cry, with earnestness, what shall we do to be saved? How shall we escape the wrath to come?

It is for these reasons, my careless hearers, and not to gratify myself, that I call your attention to

this subject. It is much more for your interest, than it can be for mine, that you should entertain just views respecting it. Let me, then, hope for your attention, while I endeavor to show you, from the word of God, *what your situation actually is;* what are the *obstacles* which oppose your escape, and which render it highly improbable that you *will escape* final condemnation.

In the *first* place, permit me to remind you, that you are, even now, under sentence of condemnation. You are already doomed to eternal death by the righteous law of God. This is a truth, which persons of your character are ever apt to forget. Many, who assent to the fact, that sinners will be condemned at the judgment day, do not seem to be aware, that they are condemned already. Yet nothing can be more certain. On this point the declarations of scripture are explicit and full. They assure us, that all have sinned, that the wages of sin is death, that the soul that sinneth shall die, that sinners are under the curse, or condemnatory sentence of God's violated law, that he who believeth not is condemned already, and that the wrath of God abideth on him. This being the case, it is evident, unless the execution of this sentence can be averted, unless you can obtain pardon of your offended God, you must perish forever. But the inspired writers assure us, with one voice, that the execution of this sentence cannot be averted, that pardon cannot be obtained, without the exercise of repentance, and faith in Christ. On these

terms alone salvation is offered, and if we neglect them there is no escape. Now that you may exercise repentance and faith, or become truly religious, several things are necessary, each of which is attended with great difficulties.

It is necessary that you should be roused from that careless, secure state, in which all men naturally live; that you should see religion to be all important, and thus be led to attend to it with earnestness. To use the language of inspiration, you must be awakened; for with respect to your spiritual and eternal interests, you are asleep. Now it is evident, that no man will attend seriously to religion, unless he sees it to be an object of importance. No man will exert himself to escape a danger, which he does not perceive; no man will think seriously of flying from the wrath to come, until he sees that he is exposed to this wrath. And it is equally evident, that no man, who, in a spiritual sense, is asleep, will see that he is exposed to this wrath, until he is roused from his slumbers, until he becomes awake to eternal realities.

Of this your own experience and observation must convince you. You cannot but know, that religion does not appear in your view, to be all important; that you do not perceive yourselves to be exposed to the wrath of God; and you know also, that, so long as this continues to be the case, you will make no exertions to escape it. You cannot but be sensible, that, should you live a hundred years in your present state of religious indifference

and insensibility, you would not advance a single step towards preparation for death, nor make one effort to become truly religious. It is then evidently necessary, that you should be roused from this spiritual lethargy, to a sense of your danger; your slumbers must be disturbed; your dreams of security and of worldly happiness must be banished, and you must awake to the realities of the eternal world; awake to a conviction that religion is the one thing needful, and that without it you must perish forever. Until this is done, nothing can be done. Until this is done, you will no more take one step towards heaven, than a man buried in sleep will commence a journey. But to rouse you from this slumbering, careless state, to fix your attention on religious subjects, is exceedingly difficult. Of this, too, your own experience may convince you. The speaker has been laboring for many years to effect this object by every means in his power; but with how little success, you well know. Nay more, God has long been using means to rouse you. He has called to you, Awake thou that sleepest; rise up, ye that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones; woe to them that are at ease in Zion! He has enforced attention to these calls by the dispensations of his providence. He has sent mercies and afflictions. Many of you he has visited with sickness, and thus brought you near to the eternal world; and he has caused all of you to witness, in repeated instances, the death of friends and acquaintance. But all in vain. You still slumber

on, and dream of worldly objects, while death is daily approaching to hurry you to the bar of God. You still feel a strong unwillingness to have your false peace disturbed, and to commence a religious life. To every messenger of God, to every friendly monitor you reply, I pray thee have me excused. A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. Here then is one great difficulty, which opposes your conversion. And is there not great reason to fear, that it will prove insuperable? Does it not render your conversion, and consequently your escape from final condemnation, highly improbable? Since you have already lived so many years without becoming religious, and even without being persuaded to make it an object of earnest attention, is it not probable that you will continue to live in the same manner, till death arrives, especially since all means have been tried in vain, and no new means remain to be employed?

But this is not all. That you may escape final condemnation, it is necessary, not only that you should be roused to think seriously of religion, but that you should be induced to pursue it with constancy and perseverance. You must be awakened, and you must be kept awake; and the latter, is the more difficult thing. For though it is by no means easy to rouse you to a sense of your situation, it is far more difficult to prevent you from relapsing into a state of spiritual slumber. The very air of this world, has a drowsy effect; and there is

a strong and constant propensity in the human heart to lose all serious impressions, and to become careless and indifferent respecting its eternal interests. Besides, religion is always disagreeable to men, when they first make it a subject of attention. They cannot then embrace its promises; they knew nothing of its divine consolations; they see nothing in the Bible, but a system of restrictions, and threatenings, and penalties; it requires them to renounce the objects, which they love, and gives them nothing in return; every page seems to impose on them some duty, which they are unwilling to perform, or requires of them some sacrifice, which they are unwilling to make, or denounces against them some threatening, which they are unwilling to believe. Hence they are strongly tempted to withdraw from it their attention, and return to their former careless state. Hence scarcely one in five of those, who are roused from their slumbers, can be prevented from again falling asleep, though to sleep, is to perish.

Here again, we may appeal to your own observation and experience. Many of you have, at different times, been roused from your natural state of careless security. You have been made to see that religion is important. You have felt something of the powers of the world to come, and resolved to attend to your eternal interests. But no sooner were these impressions made, than they began to be effaced; in a few days, or, at most, in a few weeks, they were entirely gone, and your slumbers

became more profound than before. Similar effects of this propensity to lose serious impressions you have often witnessed in others. How many in this assembly have you seen attending to religion for a while with earnestness, and then again treating it with entire neglect. Now this propensity remains in your breasts in its full force, and it will forever oppose all persevering attempts to become religious. Here, then, is another great obstacle, which opposes your conversion. And when you consider how great it is; when you reflect on the instability of your religious views; on the proneness of your thoughts to wander from religious subjects, even while in the house of God, does it not appear highly improbable, even to yourselves, that you shall ever be the subjects of permanent religious impressions; that you shall ever be induced to pursue religion with that fixedness of purpose, that intensity of feeling, and that persevering diligence, which alone can secure success? Does it not appear exceedingly probable, that you will continue to live as you have done, making resolutions, but delaying their accomplishment, until your day of grace comes to an end, and the sentence of final condemnation is executed upon you?

Should you however be enabled to overcome these obstacles, others still greater will oppose your progress. With whatever diligence and perseverance you may attend to religious subjects, it will avail nothing, unless you obtain proper views of your own characters, or, to use the language of

scripture, unless you are convinced of sin; for no man will seek to escape the condemning sentence of God's law, unless he fears it; no man will fear it, unless he sees that he deserves it, and no man will see that he deserves it, unless he sees himself to be, not only a sinner, but a great sinner; such a sinner as the Bible asserts him to be. Besides, no man can repent of his sins, until he is convinced of them; and we have already seen, that, without repentance, there is no pardon. A deep and thorough conviction of your own sinfulness, then, is indispensably necessary to your salvation. But to produce such a conviction in your minds, is one of the most difficult things imaginable. It is always exceedingly difficult to convince a man against his will, to convince him of any unwelcome or disagreeable truth; and the more disagreeable any truth is, so much the more difficult it becomes to produce a conviction of it. How difficult it is, for instance, to convince a consumptive man of his danger. How difficult to make men sensible of their own faults, or to make fond and injudicious parents see the faults of their children. But there is no truth more disagreeable to men, no one, therefore of which they are so unwilling to be convinced, as that which asserts their exceeding sinfulness. To see their sins is mortifying, is painful, is alarming. They will therefore, shut their eyes against the sight as long as possible. Many sins they will deny themselves to be guilty of; what they cannot deny, they will extenuate, and for those,

which they cannot extenuate, they will make a thousand excuses. If the fallacy of one excuse is shewn, they will fly to another, and from that to a third, and fourth; and when all their pleas and excuses are answered, they will return and urge them all a second time with as much confidence as at first.

But this is not all. The scriptures teach, and observation proves, that one effect of men's sinfulness is to make them blind to their own sins. It prevents men from forming clear conceptions of the rule of duty, that is, the law of God. Sin consists in a transgression of this law, and so long as men have indistinct conceptions of it, they will, of course, have very imperfect views of their transgressions. Sin too renders men in a great degree insensible to the perfections, the authority, and even to the existence of God; and, therefore, they see little of the criminality of offending him. Besides, sin impairs, and almost destroys the sensibility of conscience, and thus prevents her from perceiving and reproving what is wrong in our temper and conduct. These remarks we see daily verified in our intercourse with the world. We often see the most abandoned characters entirely blind to their own views. We see, that, the longer men persist in vicious courses, the more insensible they become to the voice of conscience. It is the same with respect to those sins of the heart, of which you are all, my careless hearers, guilty; and of which you must be convinced, or perish. It is even more difficult

to see these sins in ourselves, than it is to perceive those which are open and gross. Hence the exclamation of the psalmist,—Who can understand his errors! Hence, too, we find multitudes of sinners mentioned by the inspired writers, who, when reproved by God's messengers for their sins, boldly replied,—What is our iniquity, and what is our sin, that we have transgressed against the Lord? When he said, Ye have despised my name, they replied, —Wherein have we despised it? When he said, Ye have robbed God,—they did not fear to reply, Wherein have we robbed thee? And when he charged them with uttering impious language, they asked, What have we spoken against thee? Now since human nature is the same in every age, and since it can thus impudently repel the charges of God himself, how exceedingly difficult, or rather, how impossible, must it be for us to convince you, that you are sinful in that degree, which the Bible describes! Here, as before, we may appeal to your own experience. You know the scriptures assert, in the most unequivocal terms, that the hearts of men are full of evil, that they are desperately wicked, that they are enmity against God; yet these assertions do not convince you that your hearts are thus sinful. What then will ever convince you of it? God will give you no new revelation of the fact, and his ministers can say nothing more than you have already heard, hundreds of times. And yet you must be convinced of it, or your condemnation is certain. Here then is

another and apparently an insuperable obstacle which opposes your escape, and which renders it exceedingly improbable, that you ever will escape final condemnation.

But suppose all these difficulties removed; suppose, though there is little ground for the supposition, that by some means or other you should be made sensible of your sins; still, new obstacles no less insurmountable remain to oppose your salvation. Every sinner, when convinced of his sinfulness and danger, invariably seeks deliverance in a way in which it cannot be obtained. He relies upon his own watchfulness, strength, and exertions to subdue his sinful propensities, and upon his own prayers, tears, and merits, to obtain the pardon of his sins. In the language of an apostle, he goes about to establish his own righteousness, and does not submit to the righteousness of God. Disregarding our Saviour's assertion, without me ye can do nothing, he attempts to do every thing without obtaining by faith the assistance of Christ. He says, I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me. Yet still the convicted, but misguided sinner will endeavor to come to God, and to obtain his favor without Christ. And though he is assured, that, without the teaching of God's good Spirit, he never will be able to understand the scriptures, he will not humbly pray for this teaching, but endeavor to ascertain their meaning by his own unassisted researches. These errors, if persisted in, prove

fatal. The man is soon bewildered and lost, and never finds the way to heaven; for we are taught, that the scriptures make men wise to salvation, only through faith in Christ Jesus. Agreeably, the apostle, speaking of such characters, says, they followed after righteousness, but they have not attained to righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone. At the same stumbling stone multitudes have ever since continued to stumble and fall to rise no more. After laboring a while to establish their own righteousness, as the apostle expresses it, they begin to fancy that they have succeeded. They become pleased and satisfied with themselves, and imagine that all is safe; their alarm subsides, their religious zeal declines, and they settle down upon a false foundation, never to be disturbed till the day, in which God shall come to sweep away their refuges of lies, and overflow, as with a flood, their hiding place. Others fall into a mistake of a different nature, but no less fatal. Eager to obtain relief from their guilty fears and apprehensions, and yet unwilling to obtain it by the exercise of repentance and faith in Christ, they daily seek for the application of some promise, or for some change in their own feelings, which shall encourage a hope, that their sins are forgiven. What they thus earnestly seek, they are almost sure to find. They are powerfully, but transiently, affected by some promise or encouraging portion of scripture; like the stony

ground hearers, they receive it with joy; they consider this joy as a proof of their conversion, and sit down satisfied, that now they are safe. But they are deceived, fatally deceived. They have no root in themselves, and therefore endure but for a time, and in a season of temptation fall away. My careless hearers, if you would know how many are thus deceived and perish, look at this church, or at any other church of Christ. See how many there are, who, after professing to be converted, and appearing joyful and zealous for a time, lose every thing of religion, except the name, and a little of the outward form. Yet all these persons had surmounted the first two great difficulties mentioned above. They had been roused from their slumbers, and they had been convinced of their sins; but in consequence of that strong propensity which is natural to all men, to neglect the guide provided by God, they only escaped one snare, to be entangled in another equally fatal. The same propensity exists with equal force in your breasts. Should you then be roused to think seriously of religion; nay, should you be convinced of your sins, still it is exceedingly probable, that, like them, you would go about to establish your own righteousness, or be fatally deceived by a false conversion. If you think this improbable, if you say within yourselves, we would be more wise and more cautious, it only proves, that you are under the influence of a self-confident spirit, which would infallibly plunge you into these very snares.

But suppose, that you should be preserved from these snares, that you should be enabled to surmount all the difficulties which have been mentioned, there would still remain another obstacle, which would alone be sufficient to render your conversion altogether improbable. This is a sinful, hard, unbelieving heart, which is full of enmity against God, and of opposition to his truth; and which will never believe, or submit to God, until its enmity and opposition are taken away. This you do not at present perceive. No sinner perceives it, until he has been convinced of his sinfulness and danger; till he sees, that his own exertions cannot save him, and till the true character of God and of his law is clearly brought to his view. Until this is done, he always fancies that he has some love to God, and that he sincerely desires to please him. But when he sees what God is, and what he requires, then this long concealed opposition never fails to burst forth, and the sinner finds his heart, instead of submitting to God, filled with dislike of his character and of his law. It will not repent, it will not believe in Christ, for we are assured, that every sinner hates the light, and will not come to it. Finding the light then unpleasant, the convinced sinner, if left to himself, makes a desperate effort, shuts his eyes against it, returns to his former state, and probably plunges into infidelity or some other error equally fatal. Thus it was with many during our Saviour's residence on earth. They followed him so long and so constantly, that they considered

themselves as his disciples, and are so called by an inspired writer. But on a certain occasion our Saviour brought clearly to their view some of those truths, which are peculiarly disagreeable to a sinful heart. The consequence was, that they forsook him forever. In a similar manner, I have known many go back and perish, after they seemed to have almost reached the entrance of the way of life. I have seen them sensible, that they were the chief of sinners, fully convinced, that everlasting misery would be their portion, unless they repented and embraced the Saviour, and assenting to the truth, that he was able and willing to save them. I have seen them in this state for several days, unutterably distressed by a sense of guilt and fear of God's wrath, while their understandings and consciences waged an ineffectual war with their obdurate hearts, and made vain attempts to subdue them. At length their hearts gained a fatal victory; their conviction of the truth was banished, the voice of conscience was silenced, and they returned to their former courses, and their last state became sevenfold worse than the first. The same obstacle, my careless hearers, will oppose your salvation with a strength and violence, of which you can, at present, form no conception. Terrible proofs of its power I have often witnessed, when attending the sinner's dying bed. I have seen them, when they knew that their disease was mortal, and that they had but a few days to live, fully convinced that hell would be their portion, unless they

repented—agonizing in view of their approaching fate—expressing no doubt, that the Saviour was ready to receive them, if they would apply to him with sincerity, and yet refusing to apply to him, and at last dying in despair, rather than accept, on these terms, his offered grace. While I have been holding up to their view the power, the compassion, and love of the Saviour, his precious promises, and his readiness to receive all who come to him, they have replied, yes, it is all true, but my hard, wicked, unbelieving heart will not repent, will not believe, will not pray. I can repeat prayers with my lips, but my heart feels them not. My hearers, how great, how insuperable, must be the obstacle, which, in such circumstances as these, can prevent a sinner from accepting salvation on the terms of the gospel! Whether you now believe it or not, O sinner, the same obstacle opposes your salvation, and you will one day be convinced of it.

I might easily proceed to mention other obstacles, which render your escape from final condemnation improbable, for it would require a volume to enumerate them all. I have said nothing of the fascinating power of worldly objects; nothing of the contagious influence of evil example; nothing of the strong current of prevailing customs and prejudices, which must be stemmed; nothing of the chain, which long continued habits of sinning have thrown over you; nothing of the many deceivers, who will spread snares for your feet, and cry

peace, when there is no peace; nothing of the sophistical arguments, which will be employed to overthrow your conviction of the truth; nothing of the temptations to neglect religion, which will daily assail you on the right hand and on the left; nothing of that great adversary, who, as inspiration informs us, keeps your hearts like a strong man armed, and is not to be cast out of them, but by a stronger than he. But the obstacles, which I have mentioned, are surely sufficient to render it exceedingly improbable, that you will escape final condemnation. And remember that all these obstacles are of such a nature as to furnish you with no excuse. They all originate in your own sinful carelessness, presumption and opposition to the truth. There are no obstacles on the part of God, or of the Saviour. It is your hearts, it is yourselves, which place all these mountains in the path to heaven.

And now, my careless hearers, would it answer any purpose, I could sit down and weep in anguish over the picture I have drawn, or rather, which the pencil of inspired truth has drawn of your situation. To see immortal souls thus situated, to see their way to life thus blocked up by their own folly and sinfulness, to see so many powerful causes combining to thrust them down to endless, remediless ruin,—is a sight, over which even angels might weep; nay more, it is a sight, over which the Lord of angels has wept with unavailing compassion.

Do any of you reply, It cannot be, that our

situation is so terrible, so dangerous, so nearly desperate, as has now been represented? Why then do the scriptures of truth describe it as such? Why were all the inspired messengers whom God has ever sent to men so much alarmed and distressed by the situation of their hearers? Why did one cry, O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night on their account? Why did another exclaim, I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh? Nay more, why is there joy in heaven, why do angels rejoice over every sinner, who repents? They must be perfectly acquainted with his situation; and did they not see it to be dangerous, awfully dangerous, they never would think his escape from it, by repentance, an occasion of such joy. O then, believe not your own deceitful hearts; but believe the angels, believe the scriptures, believe God, believe the Saviour, when he tells you, that strait is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and that few there be, who find it. If you will not believe all these witnesses, if you refuse to pay any attention to this warning it will furnish another proof of the greatness of those obstacles, which oppose your salvation, and of the improbability of your escape. I have no hope of ever being able to set before you truths more alarming, more adapted to rouse you from your slumbers than those, which have now

been exhibited. The word of God contains nothing more alarming, and did you really believe it, the archangel's trump would not rouse you more effectually than these truths. And shall they not rouse you? Will you still sit unconcerned on the verge of the abyss, with the wrath of God abiding on you, while you are so far from safety, while so long and difficult a journey is before you, while precipitous mountains rise, and deep gulfs sink, and powerful enemies lie in ambush, and numberless snares are spread between you and heaven? Will you sit thus, and lose the precious hours, while the night of death is approaching, while the shadows of evening are already stealing upon some of you, and while none of you is sure of a week or a day? O ye gay, thoughtless triflers! is this a situation for carelessness and gaiety? O ye, who are laboring to be rich! is this the place, in which you would lay up treasure? O ye immortal spirits! condemned already, and hastening to hear the confirmation of your sentence at the tribunal of God, can you find nothing more important than the trifles, which now engross your attention? If you have not cast off all regard to God's word, if you are not infidels in theory, as well as in practice, you cannot, methinks, contemplate with perfect indifference the view, which has been given of your situation. You cannot feel perfectly at ease, while you hear it clearly proved from the scriptures, that there is very little probability of your escaping final condemnation. If you are, in any degree, roused

from your slumbers, one great obstacle is removed. But remember, that it may easily return. Consider how easily the present impression may be effaced, how soon it may be lost, and how much more dangerous your situation will then be. Welcome every serious thought then, as you would welcome an angel from heaven. Cherish it as the apple of your eye, nay, as your own soul. Avoid every thing which tends to banish it. Dread more than death its departure. Repair to every place, in which your serious impressions may be strengthened, and use, with earnest diligence and solicitude, every means, which may increase them. Remember, that your soul, your eternal all, is at stake; that the question to be decided, is, whether you shall spend your eternity in heaven, or in hell, and that, at present, it is exceedingly probable the latter will be your portion.

Do any reply, the difficulties to be surmounted are so great, and the probability of our surmounting them so small, that we have no courage to make the attempt. It will therefore be best to give ourselves no concern respecting it, but to enjoy life while we can. And do you thus talk of enjoyment in such a situation, and while exposed to such a fate as this? Well may we say of such enjoyment, it is madness. It is far more irrational and preposterous than the mirth of criminals confined in a dungeon, and doomed to die, who attempt to drown their fears by noise and intoxication. There is no necessity for your adopting this desperate

resolution. Though your destruction is probable, it is not yet certain, and nothing but your own folly can make it so. It would indeed be certain, the obstacles before you would be insurmountable, were there not an Almighty, Sovereign Helper, who can assist you to overcome them, and who is ready to afford you assistance. While, therefore, you justly despair of saving yourselves, go to him, and implore his help. Go, and tell him, that you have ruined yourselves by disobeying him; that you have raised impassable mountains between yourselves and heaven; that you do not deserve his assistance; that you are justly condemned already, and merit nothing but eternal condemnation. This, however, which is the only safe course, I fear your sinful hearts will not consent to pursue. I fear, that, however you may now feel, you will dismiss your serious thoughts, and banish the subject from your minds, almost as soon as you leave this house. This I cannot prevent. My arm is too weak to draw you out of that fatal current, which is rapidly sweeping you away to destruction. I can only sit on the bank and weep as I contemplate the increasing strength of the current, and breathe out, in agony, cries to that God, who can alone rescue you from its power, and prevent it from hurrying you into that bottomless gulf, in which it terminates. And come, you my christian hearers—come all, who have been rescued from this fatal current; all, who can feel compassion for perishing immortals, come, and assist in crying to him for help. That you may

be excited to this, look at the scene before you. Look around, and see how many of your children, acquaintance and friends, are swept away towards perdition, while they sleep and know it not, and no voice, but that of God, can rouse them. Do you know whither they are hastening? Do you know what hell is? Do you consider how improbable it is, that they will escape its condemnation? Do you consider, that, unless grace prevents, they will, in a few years, be lifting up their eyes in torment and despair? Surely, if you know and consider these things, one universal cry of, God have mercy upon them! will burst from every christian heart.

SERMON XVI.

THE DEAD IN SIN MADE ALIVE.

EPHESIANS II. 1—7.

AND YOU HATH HE QUICKENED, WHO WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS; WHEREIN IN TIME PAST, YE WALKED ACCORDING TO THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD, ACCORDING TO THE PRINCE OF THE POWER OF THE AIR, THE SPIRIT THAT NOW WORKETH IN THE CHILDREN OF DISOBEDIENCE; AMONG WHOM ALSO WE ALL HAD OUR CONVERSATION IN TIMES PAST, IN THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH, FULFILLING THE DESIRES OF OUR FLESH AND OF THE MIND; AND WERE BY NATURE THE CHILDREN OF WRATH, EVEN AS OTHERS. BUT GOD, WHO IS RICH IN MERCY, FOR HIS GREAT LOVE WHEREWITH HE LOVED US, EVEN WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN SINS, HATH QUICKENED US TOGETHER WITH CHRIST; (BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED;) AND HATH RAISED US UP TOGETHER, AND MADE US SIT TOGETHER IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS; THAT IN THE AGES TO COME HE MIGHT SHEW THE EXCEEDING RICHES OF HIS GRACE, IN HIS KINDNESS TOWARDS US, THROUGH CHRIST JESUS.

NOTHING, my friends, is more profitable to Christians, than frequent meditations on what they once were, and what has been done for them by divine grace. Meditations on these subjects are exceedingly well suited to increase, at once, their gratitude, love and humility. To such meditations our text naturally invites us. The apostle here reminds the Ephesian Christians of their former state and character, and contrasts it with their then happy situation, and mentions the Author of the great change, in consequence of which they had passed from death unto life. And lest any should suppose that such a change was necessary for none but those, who, like the Ephesians had been heathen

and idolaters, he intimates, that he and his fellow apostles, who were Jews, had been by nature in a similar state, and had experienced a similar change. To all the true disciples of Christ, then, whether Jews or Gentiles, and to you, my Christian friends, among the rest, the language of our text may, with propriety, be addressed. You know, that once you were dead in trespasses and sins; you know, that you once walked according to the course of this world, as children of disobedience, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; you know that you were by nature children of wrath, even as others; and you hope that God has quickened, or made you alive, and raised you up to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. This passage, then, contains your religious history. It describes what you once were, and shews what you are now, and what God has done for you. To illustrate more largely these several particulars, is my present design. To you the subject cannot but be interesting, and it will be little less so to you, my impenitent hearers, if you recollect, that, in describing what Christians once were, we are describing what you are still.

I. Once, my Christian friends, you were dead in trespasses and sins. In the figurative language of scripture, a man is said to be dead to any object, or class of objects, when he is wholly insensible to it, or unaffected by it, or unsusceptible of impressions from it. Thus Paul speaks of himself, as dying, or becoming dead to the world; meaning that

he was less and less affected by worldly objects, and more and more insensible to their influence. So you were once dead with respect to your Creator, your Redeemer, to religious, to divine things, and to all the concerns of your everlasting peace. In other words, you were entirely insensible to these things; they did not affect you, they made no impression upon your minds, any more than if they did not exist, and, in fact, you did not at all realize their existence. You were alive to other objects. You possessed an animal life, which enabled you to have communion with the irrational animals in the pleasures of sense. You possessed what may be called rational, or intellectual life, by which you were qualified to maintain intercourse and communion with your rational fellow creatures in the pursuit and enjoyment of worldly objects. But of that spiritual life, which renders the soul susceptible of impressions from spiritual objects, and prepares it for the enjoyment of intercourse with God and holy beings, you were entirely destitute. Being thus spiritually dead, you were, of course, devoid of spiritual senses. You could neither hear, nor see, nor feel. You could not hear God's voice, either in his word, or in the dispensations of his providence. He spoke once, yea, twice, but you perceived it not; nor did you ever truly hear a single sermon, though you might, perhaps, listen to many. You were also spiritually blind. You saw no glory in God, no beauty in Christ, no hatefulness in sin, no excellency in the plan of sal-

vation revealed in the gospel. Like all men in their natural state, you received not the things of the Spirit of God, but they were foolishness to you; neither could you know them, because they are spiritually discerned, and you had no spiritual sight. Nor were you less destitute of feeling. You felt nothing of the load of guilt, which pressed you down; nothing of the wickedness and hardness of your own hearts; nothing of the goodness of God, and the dying love of Jesus Christ. You did not even feel, that you were dead, but lay buried in a grave of trespasses, and wrapped up in a winding-sheet of sins, as insensible of your situation as a corpse, and as completely cut off from all intercourse or communion with God and holy beings, as a corpse is from intercourse with the living; nor did you any more desire to rise from this state, than a corpse desires to rise from the slumbers of the grave. Many attempts, indeed, were made by the beings around you, to rouse you from this state, and sometimes they seemed, for a moment, to be attended with partial success. Like a corpse operated upon by the power of electricity, or galvanism, you exhibited some faint symptoms of returning animation, or at least of irritability; your eyes were perhaps half unclosed, and you cast an anxious glance around; but the bands of death were too strong to be thus broken, and you soon relapsed into a state of complete moral insensibility. But,

2. While you thus lay, in a spiritual sense, dead in trespasses and sins, you were in another sense,

alive, awake and active. Though dead to your Creator, you were alive to your fellow creatures; though dead to the future world, you were alive to this; though destitute of that life, which the Holy Spirit communicates, you were vehemently actuated by that evil spirit, which, as our text informs us, works in all the children of disobedience. Hence, you walked according to his will, or, which is the same thing, according to the common course of this sinful and apostate world. The tempter, as a strong man armed, kept possession of your hearts, as his castle, and, by a constant succession of temptations, suited to your depraved taste, he excited your appetites, inflamed your passions, and thus hurried you forward with blind eagerness and impetuosity in a course of self-gratifications and disobedience to God. As the world around you lived, so you lived. Like them, you cast off fear, and restrained prayer before God; like them, you neglected your Creator, your Redeemer, your souls and eternity; and, like them, your whole employment and happiness consisted in fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. Some of you, especially during the season of youth, were most intent on gratifying the desires and appetites of the body. You drank deep of the intoxicating cup of pleasures, rejoicing in youth, and walking in the way of your own hearts, and the sight of your eyes. Others were more devoted to the service of those passions, which are seated in the mind; and to gratify them by the acquisition of wealth, or honor, or

applause, was the grand object of your lives. In a word, you lived, just as hundreds around you, whose madness and depravity you contemplate with mingled surprise, pity and abhorrence, are living now. Meanwhile, God hearkened and heard, but you spake not aright. None of you repented of his wickedness, saying what have I done? but every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

3. Being then dead in sin, and children of disobedience, you were, of course, children of wrath; or, in other words, objects of the just indignation and wrath of God. He was angry with you every day; and once and again insulted justice cried, Cut them down—why cumber they the ground? But mercy interposed, and you were spared. Meanwhile, you thought nothing of the justice, which threatened, or the mercy, which spared you, but were wholly occupied by your worldly pursuits; and, with scarcely a thought of an hereafter, remained insensible as a corpse, over which the thunders were rolling, and round which the lightnings of heaven were spending all their fury. You went on with the tempter enthroned, and strongly fortified in your hearts; sin spreading its deadly influence through all the powers of your soul, and all the members of your body; a frowning and angry God looking down upon you from above, his curse resting upon your persons, your possessions, and all the works of your hands; the world spreading all her allurements, to draw you on in the broad

road to destruction, and hell opening wide in the path before you; while death, with his envenomed dart, stood waiting a commission to transfix and hurl you down to quenchless flames below. Such, my christian friends, was once your character and situation. Such, my impenitent hearers, is still yours. Having thus shewn what you were, we proceed,

II. To shew what God has done for you. And,

1. When you were thus dead in trespasses and sins, he quickened, or made you alive. You lay, some of you a longer, and some a shorter time in the wretched state, which has been described, like the dry bones, which the Prophet saw in the valley of vision, and there you had lain till now, had not sovereign grace interposed. But he, who had, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, in his own appointed time, began to manifest towards you his eternal purposes of love. The season approached, in which he determined, that the dead should hear the voice of the Son of man; and that they, who heard, should live. In preparing you for the great change, God dealt with you, not as machines, but as rational beings. He sent some one to call to you, saying, O ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord. Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead. By the influences of his Spirit, the call was rendered in some measure effectual. These influences were, however, as yet exerted only in operating upon your ra-

tional powers and faculties. Your attention was roused, and turned to religious objects. Your slumbering consciences were awakened, and began to review your past lives, and present characters; to compare them with the divine requirements, and to upbraid you with your numerous deficiencies. Your understandings were convinced, that something must be done, and done speedily. The new objects thus presented to your mind, and the new interest which they excited, weakened the influence of worldly objects, and rendered you less eager in their pursuit. You began to read the scriptures, and other religious books, with something of a desire to understand them. You felt disposed, you could scarcely tell why, to associate with pious persons, to hear religious conversation, and to frequent religious meetings. You listened with more interest, than formerly, to the preached word; you felt yourselves personally addressed, and the truths which you heard, sometimes pleased, sometimes offended, and sometimes condemned and distressed you. Thus your attention was more and more strongly fixed on religious subjects; and the interest, which they had excited, increased. But still you were far from being sensible of your true character and situation. You did not know, or even suspect, that you were dead in trespasses and sins; that your minds were enmity against God, or that it was impossible for you, in your situation at that time to please him. Ignorant of God's righteousness, you went about to establish your own, and

refused to submit to the righteousness of God. While engaged in this fruitless attempt, your minds were agitated and perplexed by various and conflicting emotions. Sometimes you imagined that you were almost a Christian, and not far from the kingdom of heaven. Then some new discovery of the wickedness of your hearts seemed to put you farther from it than ever. In consequence of repeated disappointments of this kind, you were often strongly tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God. You falsely imagined, that you were willing to come to Christ, but could not; and that God refused you the necessary assistance. Hence you were often tempted to go back, and give up your religious pursuits in despair. But this you found impossible. The burden of guilt, and the deep anxiety which you now felt, would not allow you to rest, though you felt more and more at a loss what to do, or to conjecture the cause of your ill success. By slow degrees, however, you begin to discover the cause. The commandment, as the apostle expresses it, came to you more clearly and powerfully; and as its light increased, sin revived and you died. You began to perceive something of that spiritual death, of which you had not been aware. You found, that in you there dwelt no good thing, that your hearts were impenetrably hard and insensible; that all your religious duties had proceeded from selfish principles, and were, of course, abominable in the sight of God. Then you felt, more than ever,

your need of a Saviour; but, at the same time, more unable, or more unwilling than ever, to come to him. But, at length, you were made to see clearly, that the fault was your own; that you would not come to Christ for life; and that you were dead, utterly dead, in trespasses and sins, and that, unless God interposed to save you, you should remain dead forever. This led you to submit, unconditionally, to sovereign mercy, and prepared you to feel, that, if ever you were saved, you must be saved by grace, and to give all the glory of your salvation to him, to whom it is due. Thus the preparatory work was accomplished, and he, whose work it was, saw that all obstacles to the display of his grace were removed; and then, as the apostle expresses it, by the working of that mighty power which wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, he breathed into you the spirit of life, and you became a living soul. At first, however, you were perhaps scarcely conscious of the wonderful change, or, at least, were conscious of it only by its happy effects. But these effects were such, as could result from nothing but the communication of spiritual life.

You found yourselves as it were, in a new world. A new and interesting class of beings and objects, which had always surrounded you, but which you had hitherto never perceived, now presented themselves to your view; and the scriptures, which had heretofore seemed like the earth, at its first creation, a mighty chaos, without form and void, now

appeared to you full of beauty, order and harmony. This was the consequence of your possessing those spiritual senses, which ever accompany spiritual life; and which enable the possessor to discern both good and evil. You now began, for instance, to possess and to exercise spiritual sight. The eyes of your understanding were opened to see wondrous things out of God's law. Among these wondrous things, one object appeared preeminently glorious, beautiful and lovely. This was Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. The light, which flowed from him, rendered both himself and other spiritual objects visible. The wondrous plan of salvation by him, now opened to you: you began to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, a knowledge of whom is eternal life, and to understand something of the various offices, which Christ sustains with respect to his people. At the same time, you began to hear God's voice in his word and in the dispensations of his providence. You could now hear him speaking peace to his people and to his servants, and the sound was music to your ears. You were also endued with spiritual feeling. Your hearts of stone were transformed to flesh, and you became susceptible of deep and lasting impressions from religious objects, and felt a quick sensibility when they were presented to your minds. Nor were you devoid of spiritual taste. You could now taste and see that the Lord is good; you hungered and thirsted after righteousness; and, as new-born babes, desired the sincere milk of the

word. And while you were thus endued with new senses, adapted to perceive spiritual objects, the new life, which God had given you, began to spread through all the powers and faculties of your nature, rendering them instruments of righteousness unto holiness Having thus restored you to life, God next proceeded,

2. To raise you from the grave of sin, and cause you to sit together in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. The situation, which had suited and pleased you, while in a state of spiritual death, became disagreeable and irksome to you, when restored to life. The spirit of disobedience, which had wrought in you, was banished, and succeeded by the Holy Spirit, the author of life and peace. You could no longer walk according to the course of this world, nor were you any longer children of wrath. God, therefore, by freely pardoning all your sins, removed the load of guilt and wrath, which, like the great stone at the door of Christ's sepulchre, had confined you to the tomb; called you out from among the dead, who had hitherto been your associates; added you to his church, as members of the great body of Christ; conferred on you the name and the privileges of sons and heirs of God, and thus gave you a title to the heavenly inheritance, and did, in effect, make you sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Believing in him, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance. By the influences of the same Spirit

you were taught, as are all who have risen with Christ, to set your affections on things above, to look at things unseen and eternal; and to seek for that heavenly city, into which Christ as the forerunner of his people, has entered to take possession in their name, and to prepare a mansion, which shall receive them at death; when you shall actually sit down with him on his throne in the heavenly places, and live and reign with him forever and ever.

3. We are told what prompted God to raise you from the dead, and confer on you these unmerited favors, namely, his own sovereign, self-moved goodness. God, says the apostle, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; for by grace are ye saved not of works, lest any man should boast. That nothing but sovereign grace thus saved you; and that nothing but God's self-moved goodness or love prompted him to bestow on you that grace, is evident from the description already given of your natural character and situation. You were by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Of course, you did not raise yourselves from the dead. You did not even know, that you were dead, nor had you one desire to be raised from death, till God gave it you, much less did you, while in that state, perform any good works, to merit God's favor. On the contrary, you were children of wrath, and deserved nothing but the wrath of God forever. Nothing

but God's grace, then, or in other words, nothing but his unmerited favor, raised you from this state, and nothing but his love led him to grant you that grace. But how could he love those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and consequently more hateful in his sight, than a putrefying corpse is in ours? I answer,—he loved you as in Christ, and merely for the sake of Christ, whom he had from eternity appointed to be your covenant head. Our Saviour, you recollect, often speaks of a people, who were given to him by his Father. All that the Father giveth me, says he, shall come to me; and this is the will of my Father, that of all that he has given me I should lose none. Now of all, who were thus given to Christ, he was from eternity appointed to be the covenant head. Hence we find the apostle, in the preceding chapter, saying of himself and all other Christians, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Of this people, thus chosen in Christ as their head, and given to him, you, my Christian friends, were a part, and as such, God loved you. As he says to his ancient people, I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you; so we may consider him as saying to us, I have loved you in Christ,

and for his sake, with an everlasting love, therefore I have raised you from the death of sin.

Hence the apostle, speaking of Christians, says, God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Here then, my Christian friends, you may trace up the streams of your happiness to the fountain, and see them all flowing from the great abyss of God's eternal, sovereign, distinguishing love. And his design, in thus loving and saving you, was, as the apostle informs us in the verse succeeding our text, that, in the ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. Not for your sakes, then may he say, do I this, be it known to you, but for my great name's sake, that it may be glorified thereby. Not unto us, then may we in turn reply, not unto us, but unto thy great name alone, O Lord, be all the glory and all the praise.

APPLICATION.

1. My Christian friends, has God done all this for you? Has he loved you with an everlasting love? Has he quickened you, when you were dead in trespasses and sins; has he raised you up together and made you sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? Has he done all this for children of wrath, done it for you of mere grace

or mercy, without any desert of such favors on your part? Need any thing, then, be said to convince you, that you ought to love him, to praise him, to live to him and him only? If it is a sin not to be grateful for life, is it not a much greater sin to feel no gratitude for the gift of spiritual and eternal life? If sinners ought to love him, who created them, because he is the former of their bodies, and the father of their spirits, ought not you much more to love him for creating you anew in Christ Jesus unto good works? What sum would induce you to be again thrown back into the awful situation from which his grace has raised you? What would tempt you to consent to be again dead in trespasses and sins, under the power of Satan, and children of wrath, and in a state of awful uncertainty, whether you ever awake? For what would you sell the gifts, which you hope a benevolent God has given you? Would you exchange them for all the worlds he ever created? If not, you ought to be as grateful, as if he had actually given you all these worlds; for, in fact, he has given you more. O then, bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits. Let the love of Christ constrain us. Let me urge and entreat you, by the tender mercies of God, by all that he has done for you, by all that you hope for, to present your bodies and your souls a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2. Has God done all this for you? then he will

do more. Has he loved you from eternity? then he will love you to eternity. Has he raised you from spiritual death? then he will never suffer you to fall under the power of death a second time. Has he given you spiritual life? then he will give it more abundantly. Has he made you sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? Then, as surely as Christ ascended to heaven after his resurrection, so surely shall you ascend to heaven, and sit down together with him there forever and ever. This is evident from the design, which God had in view in raising you from spiritual death. He did it, as our text informs us, that, in the ages to come, he might display the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. But should he cease to carry on the work he has begun, the riches of his grace could not be displayed; all the glory of his grace would be obscured, and all that he has done for you, would be worse than thrown away. For his name's sake, for his glory's sake, therefore, he will continue to carry on the work he has begun in you, and render it perfect in the day of Christ Jesus. Be not then discouraged by the difficulties and obstacles you meet with; work out your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God worketh in you to will and to do. He will give more grace. He will perfect that which concerneth you; he will not forsake the work of his own hands. Plead with him, then, what he has done, as a reason why he should do more. Cry to him,

with the Psalmist, thou hast delivered my soul from death; wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, and my eyes from tears?

To conclude—We have already observed, my impenitent hearers, that what Christians once were, you are still. You are dead in trespasses and sins; you are walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and are, of course, children of wrath. Whether God will ever raise you from this state, is altogether uncertain. He has no where promised that he will. You are altogether unworthy of such a favor. You are condemned already, and he may, of course, justly leave you to perish. If you ask what you shall do; God's answer is, Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. If you reply, We cannot do this,—I can only say, I have no commission to notice such an excuse; my business is to bring you God's messages. This I have done in his own words. Consider how you will treat them.

SERMON XVII.

UNIVERSAL LAW OF FORGIVENESS.

LUKE XVII. 3, 4.

IF THY BROTHER TRESPASS AGAINST THEE, REBUKE HIM; AND IF HE REPENT, FORGIVE HIM. AND IF HE TRESPASS AGAINST THEE SEVEN TIMES IN A DAY, AND SEVEN TIMES IN A DAY TURN AGAIN TO THEE, SAYING, I REPENT; THOU SHALT FORGIVE HIM.

On hearing this passage read, you will probably conclude, that the duty of forgiving those who injure us, is to be the subject of discussion. That is, indeed, an important subject, and a subject, to the consideration of which our text would naturally lead us. I do not, however, at present propose to discuss it. I wish to make a somewhat different use of this passage. I wish to set before you the proof, which it indirectly exhibits, of our Saviour's readiness to forgive, again and again, those who trespass against him. It may, I conceive, be very satisfactorily shewn, that he regulates his own conduct by the rule, which he here gives to us, that he is quite as ready to forgive, as he requires us to be, and that, however frequently we may have trespassed against him, he will, if we repent of our trespasses, forgive us. And it is highly important, that his people should entertain a deep, heartfelt conviction of this truth; for many of the evils under which they groan, result from the want of such a conviction, or from their not having just and adequate views of the boundless extent of his

pardoning mercy. They believe that it is great, but are far from seeing how great it really is. They believe that he can forgive them once, twice, thrice, and they find that he does so. But when, after being often forgiven, they are betrayed into new offences, they not unfrequently begin to think that he must be weary of forgiving them, and that it will be little better than an insult to ask him to forgive them again. Hence they dare not implore his forgiveness, dare not approach him with confidence, but remain at a distance, unpardoned, oppressed with conscious guilt, and a prey to gloomy, desponding, apprehensions. They have no courage to attempt the performance of difficult duties, no strength to resist temptations; their comfort is gone, their religious progress is interrupted. Thus a sin, which, had it been immediately repented of and confessed, would have been pardoned, becomes the occasion of many sins, and perhaps of a long course of declension. Now all these evils would be prevented by adequate views of our Saviour's readiness to forgive. Of course, it is highly important, that all his people should possess such views. I shall therefore, endeavor to shew, that if we trespass against Christ seven times, or any number of times, in a day, and as often turn unto him in the exercise of unfeigned repentance, he will freely forgive us, and restore us to favor. But before we proceed to establish this truth, it will be necessary to make some remarks with a view to illustrate its

import, and prevent dangerous mistakes. And,

1. It must be carefully kept in mind, that the rule, which our Saviour here gives us, relates not to what men would call crimes, not to those gross public offences, which transgress the laws and disturb the peace of society; nor even to gross injuries, but to trespasses only. We cannot suppose him to mean, that if a man should attempt seven times in a day to murder, or rob us, or to steal our property, and, when detected, should say, I repent, —we must forgive him, and suffer him to go at large unpunished. It would be perfectly evident in such a case, that the offender did not repent, and that his professed repentance was all a pretence. The word, trespass, seems to mean offences of a different kind, and of a more private nature; such offences as a man may be led into repeatedly by misapprehension, or sudden passion, or an unhappy temper. These causes may, it is evident, lead men to offend, and to offend often, those whom they really love. They may lead a relative, a friend, a christian brother, or one, on whom we have conferred favors, to speak reproachfully, to treat us unkindly, to withhold such acts and expressions of kindness, as we had a right to expect, and in various other ways to wound our feelings. Now offences of this nature, are what our Saviour means by trespasses, and such trespasses, however often they may be repeated, we are to forgive, if the offender expresses sorrow and asks forgiveness. It is to offences of a similar nature, committed against

Christ by his disciples, that we refer in the present discourse. He, it will be recollected, sustains with respect to his people various offices and various relations. He is their master, their teacher, their shepherd, their guide, their advocate, their benefactor, their brother, their friend. He has, therefore, a right to be regarded and treated as such. He has a right to expect their obedience, their confidence, their gratitude and love; in a word, their supreme affection and regard. He has also a right to expect, that they will follow him wherever he leads the way; that they will be contented and satisfied with all his dispensations, and that his honor and interest shall lie near their hearts. Whenever his people forget and overlook their rights, when they cease to regard and treat him as he deserves; when their love and gratitude grow cold; when their confidence in him declines, and they indulge doubts and suspicions respecting his faithfulness; when they murmur, repine, or become discontented with his allotments; when they feel little concern for his cause; in short, when they neglect to do what will please him, or indulge in any thing, which they know will grieve or offend him, then they are guilty of trespassing against Christ; for all offences of this nature are directly against him. They are not, strictly and literally speaking, direct violations of the moral law; nor are they committed directly against God the Father, though he is, of course, offended whenever he sees his Son treated unworthily; but they are,

in the strictest sense, trespasses against Christ, considered as sustaining all those offices and relations, which were mentioned above. They are trespasses against one, who has condescended to become our brother, benefactor and friend; and he might justly be provoked by them to withdraw and hide himself from the offenders, and to suspend all further bestowal of his favor, all his kind interpositions on their behalf. Now these trespasses against Christ include *all* the sins, into which his people are most liable to fall, and *almost* the *only* sins, into which they are liable to fall *frequently*; for Christians will not sin wilfully, nor will any Christian be frequently guilty of gross and open offences. But any Christian may trespass against Christ, we cannot say how frequently, in some of the ways, which have just been mentioned. He may daily, and many times in a day, grieve his Saviour, by the want of right feelings towards him, or by the exercise of those which are wrong. Many times in a day he may forget him, or think of him without gratitude, confidence and love; at all times his affection for his Saviour falls very far short of what he deserves. Now these are the trespasses which, however often repeated, Christ will always forgive, as soon as we turn to him in the exercise of repentance: and should we grieve and offend him by such trespasses seven times, or seventy times seven in a day, and continue thus to multiply our trespasses for years, still, every new exercise of repentance on our part, would be followed by a

new act of forgiveness on his. But let no bold presumptuous offender infer from this truth, that Christ will, in like manner, forgive known, wilful, deliberate sins. Let no one suppose, that he may be daily or frequently guilty of fraud, or intoxication, or profaneness, or of any wilful transgression, and yet escape punishment by saying at night, I repent. It is most evident, that such a man does not repent, that he is not a disciple of Christ, that he has no part nor lot in the matter. This leads me to remark,

2. That, in the rule which our Saviour here gives, he requires us to forgive an offending brother on his professing repentance, or on his exhibiting external evidence that he repents. As we cannot search the heart, this external evidence is all which we can justly require or expect; and where this evidence is given, we must charitably hope that the repentance is sincere. But our Saviour, it must be recollected, can search the heart. He therefore cannot, and ought not, to be satisfied with any professions or external evidences of repentance, or with any thing indeed but repentance itself. In this respect, therefore, the rule before us, considered as adopted by our Saviour for the regulation of his conduct, must be slightly varied. We must forgive, when offenders seem to repent. He will forgive, when they really do repent. We remark,

3. That the word, forgiveness, may be used in two senses somewhat different. It may be used to

signify either an official act, or the act of a private individual. Considered as an official act, forgiveness is the remission of deserved punishment, or of that punishment, to which transgressors are legally doomed. In this sense, forgiveness can be granted only by one, who has authority to do it. It cannot be granted by a private individual. No private individual, for instance, can forgive or pardon a murderer. No such individual has any right to say, that a murderer shall not be punished. But forgiveness, considered as the act of a private individual, is something different. It consists in laying aside all feelings of revenge, and ill will, and displeasure, towards the offender, and in restoring him to the same place in our favor and friendship, which he held previous to his trespass. Now it is more especially, though not exclusively, in the latter sense, that we use the word forgiveness in the present discourse. What we mean to assert is, that Jesus Christ, not in his judicial character, but in his private capacity as an individual, will forgive every penitent, however frequently he may have trespassed against him. In other words, he will entertain no feelings of displeasure towards the penitent offender, will regard him with no coldness, but will restore him to his favor, and receive him with as much affection as if he had never offended him. Not only so, but he will continue to act as his Saviour and Advocate, and intercede for him, that he may be forgiven by his Father. This view of the subject will be found to meet ex-

actly the case and the wants of one, who feels conscious that he needs forgiveness, but who is ashamed or afraid to ask it. Ask such a man the cause of his guilty fears and apprehensions, and he will reply, I have sinned against God, I have transgressed his law, and am justly condemned to die. Remind him, that God is ready to forgive every sinner, for whom Christ intercedes, and that Christ is equally ready to intercede for all who trust in him, and he will reply, I am ashamed to ask Christ to intercede for me, I have trespassed against him so often, have so often been forgiven, and abused his kindness afresh, and my whole treatment of him has been such a series of distrust, ingratitude, and want of affection, that it seems as if it must be impossible for him to pardon me again, and as if I ought not to ask it. But let such a man be convinced that his much injured Saviour has adopted his own rule with respect to forgiveness, and that he will receive with unabated kindness every penitent, however numerous his trespasses may be, or however frequently he may have been previously forgiven; I say, let him be convinced of these truths, and his difficulties will vanish; he will again repent, and again be forgiven. And when he has thus obtained his injured Saviour's forgiveness, he will through his intercession obtain forgiveness of God.

Having thus shewn what is meant by the assertion, that our Saviour regulates his conduct towards his offending people by the rule, which he

has given us in the text, and that he is therefore as ready to forgive, as he requires them to be,—we proceed,

II. To shew what reason we have for believing this assertion. We have reason to believe it,

1. Because the relations, which Jesus Christ has taken upon himself, require that he should regulate his conduct by this rule. By assuming our nature, he has become, in the sense of the text, our brother. Agreeably, we are informed, that he is not ashamed to call us brethren. He taught the same truth, when he said to his disciples, I ascend unto my Father and to your Father; for they who have the same father are brethren. He is also said to be the first-born among many brethren. Now if Jesus Christ has condescended to take upon himself the relation of a brother to his people, we may be assured, that he will faithfully perform all the duties of that relation. He has thus in effect bound himself to do it. And since he has taught us, that one duty of a brother is to forgive the trespasses of a penitent brother, however numerous they may be, or however frequently he may repent, we may be sure, that, if we are penitent, he will forgive our trespasses, though they should be as numberless as the sands of the sea, and though they may have been repeated after frequent pardons.

Again—By assuming our nature, Jesus Christ is become a man. Of course, he has brought himself under obligations to obey all the laws and

precepts, which God has given to man. Agreeably we are informed, that, being made of a woman, he was made under the law; that is, was made subject to its authority, and placed under obligations to obey it. That it was incumbent on him to obey all other divine precepts, as well as those of the moral law, appears from the reply which he made to John the Baptist previous to his baptism. John had said to him on this occasion, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? Jesus answered, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. As if he had said, It is incumbent on me to obey every divine precept, and observe every divine institution, and since baptism is a divine institution, I must be baptized. Now if it was incumbent on Jesus Christ, considered as a man, to obey every divine precept, it was, of course, incumbent on him to obey those precepts, which require us to forgive the trespasses of a penitent brother. And if it was incumbent on him to regulate his conduct by these precepts, we may be perfectly sure, that he has done it, and will do it, since he invariably does what is right.

Once more—When Christ came into this world, as the Saviour of lost men, he undertook to be their teacher and guide. As such, it was evidently proper that he should teach them, not only by precept, but by example. Accordingly we are told, that he has left us an example, and that we should walk in his steps. But if he has set us an example, it must be in every respect perfect. It must be a

perfect example of forgiveness, as well as of other duties. And that it may be so, it is necessary, that he should exhibit the same readiness to forgive, and to repeat forgiveness, which he requires of us. If he requires us to forgive a penitent brother, though he should trespass against us seven times, or even seventy times seven, he will forgive as frequently those, who trespass against him; for it is impossible to suppose, that in this, or in any other respect, he will suffer himself to be excelled by any of his disciples.

2. We have reason to believe that our Saviour has adopted the rule before us, for the regulation of his conduct, because he has, in fact, always acted in conformity with this rule. However frequently any of his disciples may have trespassed against him, they have invariably found him more ready to forgive, than they were to repent. As it respects yourselves, those of you, who are his disciples, know, that this has been the case. You know, that, after you have spent years in grieving and offending him and wearying his patience in ten thousand ways, after you have been a thousand times forgiven, and have then trespassed again; after you had treated him with such unkindness, ingratitude and neglect, as no human friend or relation could have borne, he has still been just as ready to forgive you, when penitent, as if you had never offended him before. And those of you, who have been his disciples for many years, know that he has forgiven you more than seventy thous-

and times seven trespasses. You have therefore ample reason to believe, and all his disciples have similar reasons for believing, that he regulates his conduct, in this respect, by the rule under consideration.

In passing to a practical improvement of what has been said, permit me to remark, that I am well aware of the manner, in which those, who are disposed to convert the bread of life into poison, may abuse this subject. I am aware, that, from the Saviour's readiness to forgive those who trespass against him, they may draw encouragement to repeat their trespasses. Such men there were in the days of the apostles; men, who turned the grace of God into wantonness, and continued in sin, because grace abounded. But the apostles did not therefore conceal the grace of God, neither should we. We are not to conceal truths, which will be beneficial to Christ's real disciples, because his enemies may abuse them. And none but his enemies will abuse the truth which has now been exhibited. To all his real friends it will, if believed, prove most salutary. Nothing tends more powerfully to melt their hearts, to make them ashamed of their sins, to bring them to deep repentance, and to increase their confidence in the Saviour, than just views of his readiness to forgive, and to renew his forgiveness, as often as they renew their trespasses. Such views I have now endeavored, my christian friends, to give you.

In improving what has been said, allow me to

place before you the Saviour as he appears in the light of this subject. 'See him adorned with every possible excellence and perfection, uttering the kindest invitations, and bestowing freely the richest blessings; blessings, which cost him labors, privations, and sufferings, the greatness of which we can never estimate. See him, in return for these blessings, treated with the most cruel unkindness, ingratitude and neglect; wounded in the house of his friends by those, who have eaten at his table, and trespassed against, on every side, by multitudes in ten thousand ways. See him still forgiving all these trespasses, repeating his forgiveness a thousand and ten thousand times, maintaining, as it were, a contest with his people, which shall exceed, they in trespassing, or he in pardoning. See him invariably gaining the victory in this strange contest, and constraining each of his disciples in turn to exclaim, O, who is equal, or like to thee, in forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin! Christian, can you contemplate the spectacle without emotion? Does it excite no shame or sorrow in your bosom? Does it not cause your heart to glow with admiration, and gratitude, and love to your Saviour, and with indignation against yourself? And does it not, at the same time, inspire you with confidence to come and seek forgiveness afresh? You expect soon to approach your Master's table. And you will surely wish to meet with a kind reception. You surely will not wish to come borne down with guilty fears, and harassed by jealousies, doubts and sus-

picions. Believe what you have now heard, and your wishes will be gratified. Believe what you have heard, and you will repent, you will be forgiven, there will be peace between you and your Saviour, and you will approach his table with confidence. Let no one say, I have already been forgiven so often, that I dare not, cannot ask forgiveness again. Let no one offend his Saviour by suspecting, that he is less ready to forgive than he requires us to be. It is a false humility, or rather it is concealed pride and unbelief, which prevents us from asking forgiveness and leads us to say, I am too unworthy to be forgiven. O then, my brethren, indulge not these feelings, but rather turn at once, to Christ, receive his forgiveness, and love much, because much is forgiven. And while you receive your pardon, remember what it cost him to procure it. Remember, that it is wet with his own blood, and let it be wet with your tears, tears of deep contrition and repentance.

2. If Christ is so ready to forgive every penitent offender, then nothing can prevent any offender from obtaining forgiveness, but his own refusal to repent. And, O, how great will be the guilt, how terrible, and yet how just, the punishment of every one who fails to obtain forgiveness. The guilt of such a man will be in exact proportion to the greatness of the mercy, against which he has sinned. But there can be no mercy greater than that which Christ displays. Consequently, there can be no guilt greater than that of those, who sin

against this mercy. My impenitent hearers, cease, O cease, I beseech you, to incur this aggravated guilt. If you repent, you will find the Saviour no less ready to forgive you, than he is to forgive his penitent disciples. His language to you is, though you may have not only trespassed, but sinned wilfully against me a thousand, and ten thousand times; though you may have spent many years in neglecting and offending me, yet I am still ready to forgive you; I wish to forgive you, but I must not, I cannot forgive any, who refuse to repent. My hearers, how is it possible that any man can retain a good opinion of himself, or refrain from despising himself, while conscious that he is insensible to such goodness; that he is not affected by the invitations of a Saviour so ready to forgive; that he is refusing to accept of forgiveness and salvation on terms so reasonable, so easy? How is it possible, that he should not say to himself, surely I must be devoid of all sensibility; I must be a stranger to every ingenuous feeling; I must be incapable of gratitude; I must have a heart of stone, or I could not hear, without emotion, of goodness so unbounded, or refuse to seek forgiveness, when it is offered on terms like these. My hearers, will any of you, can any of you, persist in refusing to comply with these terms! Will you leave this house unpardoned, when the Saviour is present and ready to forgive, in a moment, every one, who will return to him, saying from the heart, Lord, I repent. It should seem impossible, that

any one can choose to go away unpardoned, rather than comply with these terms; and yet it is but too probable, that many will do it. What is still worse, it is but too probable, that some will take encouragement from the Saviour's mercy to delay repentance, and repeat their trespasses with hopes of impunity. But if any are tempted to do this, let them recollect, that our Saviour cannot regulate his conduct by the rule before us, at his second coming. At his first appearing, he came, not as a judge, but as a Saviour; and it was proper that, in this character, he should display unbounded readiness to forgive. But at his second appearing, he will come, not as a Saviour, but as a judge; and in that character, he will be constrained to proceed according to the strict rules of justice. Those, therefore, who now refuse mercy, will then have judgment without mercy. O, then, seek the Lord, while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, and sink to that world, where the sound of pardon will never break in upon the wailings of despair.

SERMON XVIII.

FRAUD EXPOSED AND CONDEMNED.

PROVERBS, XX. 14.

IT IS NAUGHT, IT IS NAUGHT, SAITH THE BUYER: BUT WHEN HE IS GONE HIS WAY, THEN HE BOASTETH.

It is impossible to peruse the scriptures attentively, without finding, in almost every page, the most convincing proofs, that, since the fall, human nature has ever been the same; that the men of former ages strikingly resembled, in character and conduct, the present inhabitants of the world. How exactly, for instance, does the remark of the wise man in our text correspond with what is still daily witnessed in the commercial intercourse between man and man. He is here describing the means, which were, in his day, employed by a dishonest buyer to procure the articles, which he wished to purchase, for less than their real worth. He represents him as, with this view, exaggerating their defects, and pretending that they are worthless. It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer;—the article you would sell me is of an inferior quality; the price you put upon it is too high; even if it is worth so much to others, it is not worth so much to me, as I have no particular use for it, and do not care to purchase it. But when he is gone his way, when he has by these means obtained an article for less than its value, then he boasteth;

boasts of his skill and success in making a bargain; or at least secretly exults in it, if he dares not speak of it openly; and perhaps despises the man, of whom he has thus gained an advantage.

My hearers, I need not inform you, that the man who would be really religious, must be influenced by religion in every part of his conduct; and on all occasions, during the week, as well as on the Sabbath; in his intercourse with man, as well as in his approaches to God. Nor need I remind you, that no man can be a disciple of Christ, who does not yield to the authority of Christ; whose heart, and hand, and tongue, are not governed by the laws of Christ. Now if you consider, a moment, how many of this congregation are constantly employed in pecuniary transactions; how frequently almost every man is called to engage in them; how large a portion of your time they occupy; how many opportunities you have of doing wrong, and how constantly, how powerfully, you are tempted by your own self love, the selfishness of others, and the example of the world, to deviate from the path of rectitude,—you will feel convinced, that, to conduct your worldly business in a perfectly fair and upright manner, in such a manner as God prescribes, is a most important and difficult part of true religion; and that it is indispensably necessary to turn your attention frequently and seriously to this subject. It is a conviction of this truth, which has induced me to address you on the passage before us. And I wish it to be distinctly understood,

that I am preaching not to one, nor to a few, but to all. It is nothing, which I have seen, nothing which I have heard respecting the conduct of individuals, that has induced me to address you on this subject; but it is a conviction, that it is a most important subject, a subject in which all are interested, and which is intimately connected with the honor of religion, with your own salvation.

In discoursing upon this subject, I shall not confine my remarks to the particular case mentioned in the text, the case of a buyer, but shall extend them to pecuniary transactions of every kind; whether they are carried on between buyers and sellers, or masters and servants, or employers and those whom they employ. It will not, however, be expected, that I should discuss every difficult question, which may be asked, or give particular directions respecting every perplexing case, which may occur; since to do this in a single discourse would be impossible. I shall, therefore, pursue the method, which God has adopted in his word. He there gives us general rules, which may be applied to every particular case that can occur; rules sufficient for the direction of every one, who sincerely wishes to know and perform his duty. I shall, in the first place, mention some of these general rules, which God has given us for this purpose; and then shew, more particularly, what these rules require, and when we are guilty of violating, or neglecting them.

The *first* general rule which I shall mention, is

that which requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. This rule is indeed applicable, not only to all our pecuniary transactions, but to all our intercourse with our fellow creatures; so that a man, who should observe it, would need no other rule to direct him on all occasions. As our whole duty, with respect to God, is virtually included in loving him with all our hearts, so our whole duty with respect to men, may be summed up in loving them as we love ourselves. Agreeably, the apostle observes, that love worketh no ill to our neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law; for the commands, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet, are all contained in this one word, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Nearly of the same import, and equally applicable to every case which can occur, is our Saviour's rule, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. This rule is the more deserving of our attention, because it is one of the sayings, which Christ had just uttered, when he said, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, is like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

Another general rule, connected with this subject, is that which forbids us to covet any part of our neighbor's possessions. The command is

express and comprehensive. Thou shalt not covet any thing that is thy neighbor's. To covet, literally signifies, to desire. This command does not, however, forbid us to desire the property of another on fair and equitable terms. It does not forbid us to desire what our neighbor wishes to part with, provided we are willing to give him a suitable equivalent in return. But it forbids every desire to increase our property at our neighbor's expense. It forbids us to wish, that any thing should be taken from his possessions and added to our own. Of course, it forbids the employment of any means to increase our property by diminishing the property of our neighbor.

Again—we are frequently and expressly commanded strictly to observe, in all our transactions, the rules of justice, truth, and sincerity; to deal justly; to defraud no one, to deceive no one, to speak every man truth to his neighbor. God's language is, Ye shall not deal falsely or deceitfully. Just balances, just weights, and just measures, shall ye have. If ye sell aught to your neighbor, or buy aught at your neighbor's hand, ye shall not injure one another. Ye shall not oppress the hireling in his wages. Give to your servants that which is just and equal. Render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom. To sum up all in a word, we are informed that, this is the will of God, that no man should overreach or defraud another in any matter; for, said

the apostle, the Lord is the avenger of all such. This leads me to observe,

Lastly, that we are directed, in all our transactions, to remember, that the eye of God is upon us, and that he is a witness between us and our fellow creatures, when no other witness is present. Such are the principal rules, which God has given us for the regulation of our conduct in all our pecuniary transactions; rules, which are amply sufficient for our direction, in every case which can possibly occur.

II. Let us now proceed, as was proposed, to apply these rules more particularly, and shew what they require, what they forbid, and when they are violated. And,

1. Let us consider what these rules require of us as subjects, or members of civil society. And here we may observe, that they evidently require us strictly to observe the laws of our country with respect to the public revenue, to contribute that proportion of our property to the general and state governments, which those laws require; and to use no artifices, or evasions, with a view to avoid paying that proportion. Our Saviour, when asked by the Jews whether it were right to pay tribute to Cæsar, the Roman Emperor, replied, Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. Now if he required them to pay tribute to a foreign power, by whom they had been conquered, so long as they remained the subjects of that power, much more would he enjoin it upon us to pay tribute to a

government of our own forming, to rulers of our own choosing. Agreeably we are expressly commanded to pay tribute and custom to those, to whom tribute and custom are due ; to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. The justice, and propriety of these commands, is obvious. There is an implied contract, or agreement between a government and its subjects, by which the subjects engage to give a portion of their property in exchange for the blessings of protection, security, and social order. So long as they enjoy these blessings, they receive a valuable consideration for the sums which they contribute, or, in other words, for the taxes which they pay for the support of government. It is also evident, that the man, who possesses a large share of wealth, derives greater advantages from the laws of the land, and from the protection afforded by civil authority, than the man who possesses little or nothing. Or, to place the subject in a little different light,—civil governments insure to their subjects the protection of their rights and property from injustice and violence ; of course, they have a right to demand a premium for this insurance. This premium ought to be greater or less, in proportion to the property thus insured ; in other words, every man is bound in justice to contribute to the support of law and government, in proportion to his property. This is as just a debt as any other which can be named. The man, who by artifice or deceit, avoids contributing in proportion to his property, is guilty of injustice and dishonesty.

He not only defrauds the government, but does in effect defraud his fellow citizens; for if he contributes less than his proportion, others must contribute more to make up the deficiency. These remarks apply with equal force to those, who introduce foreign goods into the country, without paying those duties, which the laws require. This practice is contrary to the plain, express commands of God; it is contrary to the rules of justice and honesty; it involves deceit and artifice, and it is well if perjury be not added to the list, if the name of God and the solemnities of an oath are not impiously employed to conceal the fraud.

I am constrained to add, that it is little less criminal knowingly to purchase from the wharf, any merchandize, thus illegally introduced; for we thus become partakers in other men's sins, and we tempt them to repeat those sins, since it is evident that none would import merchandize in this unlawful manner, if none could be found to purchase it. It is vain to plead, as an excuse for these things, that government may waste, or misemploy the sums, which are put into their hands. We might as well refuse to pay a just debt, on pretence that our creditor would make an improper use of the money if it were paid. Equally vain is every other excuse, which can be assigned. No man, who means to do to others, as he wishes that others should do to him; no man, who means to obey God; no man, who is influenced by the fear of God, or who feels that the eye of God is upon him, can be guilty of

the practices here mentioned.—Permit me, before I dismiss this part of my subject, to express a hope, that no one will endeavor to give these remarks a political bearing, or suspect, that they are aimed particularly at any individual. They are made merely with a view to discharge an important official duty. It is my duty, as a minister of Christ, to warn you, to guard you against every thing, which God forbids, against every thing, which may endanger your immortal interests. Hence, though fully aware that this is a delicate subject, I did not dare to waive it.

In the second place, let us consider the application of the rules above mentioned to the common pecuniary transactions of life. It is evident, that, with respect to these transactions, they forbid every wish, much more, every attempt to defraud, or deceive our neighbor. They render it highly criminal for the seller to take the smallest advantage of the ignorance, inexperience, or simplicity of his customers; or to conceal any defect, which he may have discovered in the articles, of which he wishes to dispose. They render it equally criminal for the buyer to wish, or attempt to take any advantage of the seller, either by exaggerating the defects of his merchandize, or by falsely pretending that he does not wish to purchase. They render it highly criminal for any one to contract debts, when he has no sufficient reason to believe that he shall be able to discharge them; or to persuade another to become responsible for his debts, when

he has reason to suspect that his sponsor will in consequence suffer loss. In a word, they require us to put ourselves in the place of our neighbor, to be as unwilling to defraud him, as to be defrauded ourselves; to be as careful of his property and interest, as of our own; to think no more of enriching ourselves at his expense, than we should think of robbing our left hand with our right. They require us, in all our transactions, to conduct as we should do, if our fellow creatures could see our hearts; for though they cannot see them, yet God can, and does see them; he is both witness and judge between us and our neighbor in every transaction, and surely his eye ought to be as effectual in regulating our conduct, as would the eye of our fellow creatures, could they, like him, search the heart. With every man, who is governed by the rule above mentioned, this will be the case. In his most secret transactions, he will conduct as if all his views, feelings, and conduct, were to be laid before the public eye. Indeed, he will be more afraid of injuring his neighbor, than of being injured himself; for, in the latter case, he only suffers wrong, but in the former case he would do wrong, and he dreads sin more than suffering.

We might now proceed to shew what these rules require of us, with respect to those, who are employed in our service; but after the remarks which have been already made, this is perhaps needless. I would only observe, that these rules evidently forbid us to take any advantage of the necessities,

or imprudence of those, whom we employ, and require us to give them a prompt and adequate compensation for their services, and that, on the other hand, they make it the duty of all, who are employed, to be as faithful to the interest of their employers, as to their own, and to avoid defrauding them of any portion of their time, by idleness, or of their property by negligence, as they would avoid theft or robbery.

Having thus shewn what the rules of God's word require of us, with respect to our pecuniary transactions, let us, in the next place, apply these rules to our past conduct, that we may ascertain how far we have observed, and in what instances we have disregarded them. With this view, permit me to ask each of you, whether, in conducting the business of life, you have been invariably governed by these rules? Have you, in every instance, dealt with others, as you wish that others should deal with you? Have you always acted as under the eye of God, acted as you would have done, had your hearts been laid open to your neighbor's view? Have you never practised any deception, artifice, or evasion, in buying or selling, never taken any advantage of the ignorance, the inexperience or the necessities of others? Have you always contributed to the support of government that proportion of your property, which the laws required? Have your servants, or those whom you employed, never had any reason to complain of you? Have those of you, who have been employed

by others, always been strictly faithful to the interests of your employers? Is there no pecuniary transaction of your lives, which you would feel unwilling to have publicly known with all its circumstances; no one, which men would condemn were it known to them? In a word, are you prepared to go to the bar of the all-seeing and heart-searching God, and there be tried by the rules mentioned above? My friends, to that bar you must shortly go, and by these rules you must be tried. To this test every transaction of your lives must be brought; for God will bring every secret thing into judgment. And, my friends, if your own hearts condemn you, much more will God condemn you; for he is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. He will judge without partiality, favor, or affection. He will make none of those allowances and excuses for us, which self-love leads us to make for ourselves; nor will he allow the validity of any excuse, which we can offer. Then, we are told, every one, who hath done wrong, shall receive punishment for the wrong done, without any respect of person.

Indeed, we are taught that God takes special cognizance of those wrongs, which are done by artifice, fraud, and deceit, and which human laws cannot prevent or discover. We are told, that the Lord is the avenger of all, who are overreached, or defrauded in any matter, and that he will plead their cause and spoil those who oppress them. And he forbids us to take revenge of those, who

have injured us, for this very reason, that he will himself execute vengeance. Recompense to no man evil for evil; for vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. This vengeance he often begins to execute in the present life, by depriving the guilty of that property, which they have iniquitously obtained. This he often threatens to do in his word, this he often actually does in his providences. This being the case, it surely becomes every one, who is conscious of having violated the rules of God, in his pecuniary transactions, to inquire seriously what he must do. This inquiry the scriptures will readily answer. They inform such a man, that his first step must be, to repent, to repent unfeignedly, before God, for repentance must always precede forgiveness. No sin can be pardoned until it is repented of. The blood of Christ can wash out no stain of guilt, on which the tear of penitence has not fallen.

In the next place, he must bring forth fruits meet for repentance. In other words, he must make restitution to every one whom he has injured, or defrauded, so far as he can recollect who they are —this is indispensable. There is no repentance, and, of course, no forgiveness, without it. How can a man repent of iniquity, who still retains the wages of iniquity? It is impossible. If he feels any sorrow, it is occasioned, not by hatred of his sin, but by fear of the consequences. Restitution then must be made, or the offender must perish. If thou bring thy gift to the altar, says our Saviour,

and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, that is, any reason to complain of thee, go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. The altar was then the place, to which the worshippers of God brought their thank-offerings, gifts, and sacrifices for sin. Christ, we are told, is now our altar, and to this altar we must bring our prayers, our praises, our services. But he plainly intimates, that he will accept no gift of us, receive no thanks from us, listen to none of our prayers, so long as we neglect to make satisfaction to those, whom we have injured. And in vain shall we attempt to atone for neglecting this duty, by performing others, by contributing to the promotion of religious objects, or by liberality to the poor; for God has said, I hate robbery for burnt offering; that is, I hate, I will not receive an offering, which was unjustly acquired. There is, then, no way but to make restitution; and this every real christian will make to the utmost of his ability. Agreeably, we hear Zaccheus, the publican, saying, as soon as he became a christian, if I have wronged any man, I will restore him fourfold. I am aware, that this is a most disagreeable duty. Nothing can be harder, or more painful to our proud hearts. But it will be far easier to perform it, than to suffer the consequences of neglecting it. If it is not performed, our souls must perish, as sure as the word of God is true; and in consequence of indulging a false shame, we shall be overwhelmed with shame and

everlasting contempt. Even as it respects our interest in this world only, we had better, far better, put a blazing fire brand into the midst of our possessions, than retain among them the smallest particle of gain, which was not fairly obtained; for it will bring the curse of God upon us, and upon all the works of our hands.

And now, my hearers, I have discharged a most disagreeable, but, as I view it, a most necessary part of ministerial duty. I have led your attention to a subject, which it is exceedingly difficult to discuss in the pulpit, and which, for that reason, is seldom brought to view. I have shewn you, in what manner God requires you to regulate your pecuniary transactions. I have shewn you what is the duty of those, who have disregarded these requirements. And now I request you not to apply these remarks to others, but to take them home to yourselves. It is well for him, who can say, with truth, I have always obeyed in this respect the rules of God's word. Such an one, if he can be found, may cast the first stone at his offending neighbor.

To conclude,—while we apply these rules to our past conduct, let us not forget, that they must regulate our future transactions, if we mean to be the real subjects of Christ. They are, my professing friends, the laws of his kingdom, the laws which you have covenanted to obey. And I dare pledge ourselves to the world in your name, that no breach of these laws shall be tolerated in this church, and that no one, who can be proved to be guilty of disregarding them, shall remain a member of it.

SERMON XIX.

THE MARK OF DELIVERANCE.

EZEKIEL IX. 4, 5, 6.

AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, GO THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE CITY, AND SET A MARK UPON THE FOREHEADS OF THE MEN THAT SIGH AND CRY FOR ALL THE ABOMINATIONS, THAT BE DONE IN THE MIDST THEREOF. AND TO THE OTHERS HE SAID IN MY HEARING, GO YE AFTER HIM THROUGH THE CITY, AND SMITE; LET NOT YOUR EYE SPARE, NEITHER HAVE YE PITY; SLAY UTTERLY OLD AND YOUNG; BUT COME NOT NEAR ANY MAN UPON WHOM IS THE MARK.

In the preceding chapter we have an account of a discovery, made by Jehovah to the prophet Ezekiel, of the many idolatrous, impious and iniquitous practices, which secretly prevailed among the Jews. Being brought in vision to Jerusalem, the prophet was successively conducted to different places in the city, and introduced into the most secret recesses of its inhabitants, that he might see the hidden wickedness, of which they were guilty, and be convinced, by his own observation, that they were ripe for ruin. After giving him this view of the sins of his people, God proceeded to threaten them with the most tremendous judgments, and appealed to the prophet, whether these judgments were not richly deserved. Hast thou seen all this, says he, O son of man? Is it a light thing that the house of Judah commit the abominations that are committed here? for they say the Lord seeth not;

the Lord hath forsaken the earth; therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, and though they cry with a loud voice, I will not hear. The fulfilment of these threatenings was immediately witnessed by the prophet in vision, but in their execution mercy was mingled with justice. He cried in mine ears, says the prophet, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near. And behold six men came from the way of the higher gate, every man with a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations, that are done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said, Go ye after him through the city and smite. Let not your eye spare, neither have pity. Slay utterly young and old, but come not near any man, upon whom is the mark.

My hearers, St. Paul informs us, that all the calamities, which were experienced by the Jews, happened unto them for ensamples to others, and that they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. It, therefore, becomes us to study their history with the greatest attention, and to compare their character and conduct with our own; that we may derive from it that instruction, which it is intended to afford; and, especially that we may learn what we have reason

to expect at the hands of God. In this point of view, perhaps no part of their history is more interesting or instructive, than that of which a representation is given in our text. We there see, that, when God commissioned the messengers of vengeance, who had charge over Jerusalem, to exterminate its guilty inhabitants, he took care to set a mark of deliverance upon all who sighed and cried for the abominations that were perpetrated among them; and since God's rules of government and methods of proceeding with mankind are in all ages essentially the same, we may, from this particular instance, fairly deduce the following general proposition;—When God visits the world, or any part of it, with his desolating judgments, he usually sets a mark of deliverance on such as are suitably affected with the sins of their fellow creatures. To illustrate and establish this proposition, is my present design; and with this view I shall endeavor to shew what is implied in being suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures; and, that on such as are thus affected, God will set a mark of deliverance, when others are destroyed by his righteous judgments.

I. What is implied in being suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures?

That we are naturally disposed to be little or not at all affected with the sins of others, unless they tend, either directly or indirectly, to injure ourselves, it is almost needless to remark. If our fellow creatures infringe none of our real or supposed

rights, and abstain from such gross vices, as evidently disturb the peace of society, we usually feel little concern respecting their sins against God; but can see them following the broad road to destruction with great coolness and indifference, and without making any exertion, or feeling much desire to turn their feet into a safer path. Our nearest neighbor may be an atheist, a deist, a profane swearer, a Sabbath breaker, a neglecter of God and religion, an intemperate man, or any other character equally remote from that of a christian, without exciting in our breasts any concern for the dishonor which he casts upon God, any uneasiness respecting his awfully dangerous situation, or any anxiety to convince him of the error of his ways. Nay more, we are naturally but too much disposed to contemplate the sins of our fellow creatures with pleasure, either because the contrast between their vices and our own virtues gratifies our pride, or because their wicked practices seem to justify ours, and encourage us to hope for impunity in sin. In short, the language of our feelings and of our actions naturally is, what have I to do with my neighbor's conduct or belief? or what is it to me how he lives? Let him, if he pleases, disobey and dishonor God, and ruin his own soul, provided he will not injure me. It is no concern of mine: he must look to himself; am I my brother's keeper? Nor is it at all surprising, that this should be our language, for we naturally think as little of our own souls, or of our own sins, as of those of

our neighbors; and it can scarcely be expected, that he, who takes no care to save himself, should feel much concern for the salvation of others. This being the case, it is evident, that a very great and radical change must take place in our views and feelings, before we can be suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures, if the conduct of the persons mentioned in our text is the standard of what is suitable. They are represented as sighing, and even crying, on account of the abominations, which were practised by their fellow citizens; expressions, which plainly intimate that they were not only affected, but very deeply affected with a consideration of the vices, which prevailed around them. Though they lived in an evil day, a day of peculiar calamity and distress, when the judgments of God were falling heavily upon their nation; yet they not only found time to mourn for the prevailing sins of the age, but they appear to have felt more poignant grief for those sins, than for the desolating judgments which they occasioned. They sighed and cried, not so much, because their rulers were incorrigibly wicked and infatuated, their country laid waste, their capital destroyed, and many of their fellow citizens carried into captivity, as because of the abominations which were committed by the remnant that had escaped.

An imitation of their example in this respect, is the *first* proof we shall mention of being rightly affected with the sins of others; for we may be affected, and even deeply affected, with the sins of

our fellow creatures; as well as with our own, without being rightly affected. We may mourn for them merely on account of the punishments which they bring upon ourselves, or upon the community of which we are members. But if we fear sin more than the punishment of sin; if we mourn rather for the iniquities, than for the calamities which we witness; if we are more grieved to see God dishonored, his Son neglected, and immortal souls ruined, than we are to see our commerce interrupted, our fellow citizens divided, and our country invaded,—it is one proof that we resemble the characters mentioned in our text. In the sight of God, however, no feelings or affections are genuine, but such as produce corresponding practical effects. He will not consider our grief for the prevalence of any evil as sincere, unless it excites habitual and earnest endeavors for its suppression. We therefore observe,

2. That being suitably affected with the sins of our fellow creatures, implies the diligent exertion, by every means in our power, to reform them. It is, perhaps, in this respect, that we are most liable to fail. There are many, who will readily allow that vice and infidelity prevail among us, in a most alarming manner; that the Sabbath is most shamefully dishonored; that God's name is impiously profaned in our streets; that multitudes of our fellow creatures are evidently in the way to eternal ruin; and that, in consequence of our national sins, we have every reason to expect national judgments still

heavier than those, which we have already experienced. That it should be so, they will also confess is a very melancholy thing, and for a moment they will, perhaps, appear to be deeply affected by it; but still they use no means and make no exertions to counteract, or repress the evils, which they profess to lament. But as it is not sufficient to confess and lament our own sins, without renouncing them, so neither is it sufficient to mourn for the sins of others, without attempting their reformation. This attempt must be made,

First, by our example. That men are imitative beings; that the force of example is almost inconceivably great, and that there is, perhaps, no man so poor or insignificant, as not to have some friend or dependant, who may be influenced by his example, are truths so obvious, that it is scarcely necessary to mention them. This being the case, every person is most sacredly bound, in times of prevailing degeneracy, to act an open, firm, and decided part in favor of virtue and religion; and resolutely endeavor, by his example to discountenance vice and impiety in every shape. In an especial manner should he avoid the very appearance of those evils, which are most prevalent around him, and practise with double care and diligence those virtues, which are most generally neglected and despised. In vain will he pretend to mourn over the sins of the times, who by his example encourages, or, at least, does not discountenance them.

In the second place, if we would prove the

justice of our claim to the character described in our text, we must attempt to suppress vice and impiety by our exertions. We must endeavor ourselves, and exert all our influence to induce others to banish from among us intemperance, profanity, violations of the Sabbath, neglect of religious institutions, and other prevailing sins of the age and country in which we live. Thanks to the kind providence of him, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, we enjoy peculiar advantages for attempting this arduous, but glorious work with success. In our highly favored land, the interests of virtue and religion are fenced around by wholesome laws; and in consequence of the nature of our government, the care of seeing that these laws are faithfully executed, is, in a greater or less degree, committed to almost every individual among us. But it becomes us to remember, that, where much is given, much will be required. It has been justly remarked, that when God confers on us the power to do good or repress evil, he lays us under an obligation to exert that power. Agreeably, the apostle informs us, that to him who knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Hence it follows, that we are accountable for all the good which we might but have not done; and for all the evil which we might but have not prevented. By conniving at the sins of others, therefore, we make them our own. If the name of God be profaned, if his holy day be dishonored, if a fellow creature by intemperance render his family wretched, spread

a snare in the path of his children, destroy his health, and finally plunge himself into eternal ruin, when we by proper exertions might have prevented it, a righteous God will not hold us guiltless, nor will rivers of tears, shed in secret over these sins, wash out the guilt thus contracted. If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, behold we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works? If then, we would avoid his displeasure; if we wish him to set upon us a mark of deliverance, we must exert all the power and influence, with which we are entrusted, to repress the outbreakings of irreligion and vice. Those who will, if permitted, trample alike on divine and human laws, and thus shew that they neither fear God nor regard man, must be taught by their apprehensions, if they can be taught by no other means, to hide their vicious propensities in their own breasts; or, at least, not to suffer them to stalk abroad with unblushing front in open day. And I am aware, that to attempt this, is a most disagreeable and ungrateful task, a task, which very few are willing to perform. Many will mourn over the prevalence of sin in their closets, who dare not, or at least will not exert themselves to oppose it in public. When God asks, Who will stand up for me against the evil doers? who will rise up for me against the workers of

iniquity? too many are to be found, even among his professed friends, who instead of immediately answering to the call, and boldly appearing like the children of Levi on the Lord's side, pusillanimously shrink back from the honorable service, pretending that others may more properly engage in it than themselves. In fact, though we are willing to enjoy the consolations and rewards of religion, we are all too much afraid of its difficulties and duties; too unwilling to deny ourselves and take up the cross. We are sufficiently willing, that God should take care of our honor, interest, happiness; but when any thing is to be done or suffered for him, we are too prone to begin with one consent to make excuse. We are exceedingly jealous of our own rights and privileges, and ever ready to execute those laws, which secure our persons, our property and reputation. But we discover little jealousy for the honor of the Lord of Hosts; and too often suffer those laws, which are made to secure his name and his day from profanation, to be violated with impunity. But however natural or general such conduct may be, it is altogether inexcusable; nor can we be guilty of it without forfeiting all claims to the character mentioned in our text. In vain shall we pretend to love God; in vain shall we profess to be concerned for the happiness of man; in vain shall we express sorrow for the prevalence of vice and irreligion, if we will not expose ourselves to some inconveniences, submit to some sacrifices, and make some vigorous exertions to

preserve God's name from profanation, his institutions from dishonor, and the souls of our fellow creatures from everlasting perdition. God will set no mark of deliverance upon us in the day of vengeance, unless we prove the sincerity of our attachment to his cause, of our hatred of sin, and of our grief for its prevalence by appearing openly and decidedly against it. On the contrary, he will, nay he has already set on such pusillanimous friends a mark of reprobation. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this evil and adulterous generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

In the third place, to our exertions we must add our prayers. Exertion without prayer, and prayer without exertion, are alike presumptuous, and can be considered as only tempting God—and if we neglect either, we have no claim to be numbered among the characters described in our text. My hearers, permit me to request your particular attention to this remark. There is but too much reason to fear, that a regard to order, or some similar principle, induces many to exert themselves for the suppression of vice, who prove by their total neglect of prayer for divine influence, that they are strangers to the first principles of the oracles of God.

Lastly, those who are suitably affected with the sins of their fellow creatures, will certainly be much more deeply affected with their own. While they

smart under the rod of national calamities, they will cordially acknowledge the justice of God, and feel that their own sins have assisted in forming the mighty mass of national guilt. While they contemplate him, whom their sins have pierced, they will mourn and be in bitterness, as one that mourneth for an only son. While they feel constrained to repress the vices of others with a decided and viggorous hand, they will feel, that, if they are not themselves guilty of the same vices, it is wholly owing to sovereign, unmerited grace: and the cordial conviction of this truth, will temper their firmness with meekness and tenderness, and lead them to pity the offender, while they abhor the offence. If this temper be wanting, all other proofs that we are suitably affected with the prevalence of vice, will avail nothing. It is this, which distinguishes the real mourner from the proud, censorious, self righteous hypocrite, who condemns others that he may exalt himself, who censures the mote in his brother's eye, but knows nothing of the beam in his own; whose language to God is, I thank thee, that I am not like other men; and to his fellow creatures, stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am holier than thou. Such are, of all persons, most hateful to God, and the most unlike the characters mentioned in our text. In fact, it will ever be found, that he, who is most affected by the sins of others, will mourn most sincerely and feelingly for his own; and that he who is most solicitous for his own salvation, will exhibit the greatest concern

for the salvation of the souls of his fellow creatures.

Thus have we endeavored to shew what is implied in being suitably affected with the vices, that prevail among us. Should any one feel disposed to question the truth of the observations, which have been made, it would be easy to confirm them, did time permit, by appealing to the history of Noah, of Lot, of Moses, of David, of Hezekiah, of Ezra, of Nehemiah, of the prophets, of the apostles, nay, of our blessed Lord himself; nor would it be difficult to prove, that there is scarcely a good man mentioned in the scriptures, who was not thus affected with the sins of the age, and country in which he lived. But it is necessary that we hasten to shew, as was proposed,

II. That on such, as are thus affected, God will set a mark of deliverance, when those around them are destroyed by his desolating judgments. The truth of this proposition may be inferred,

1. From the justice of God. It will be recollected, that national judgments are always the consequence of national sins. But in the guilt of these sins the characters we are describing do not share. On the contrary, they mourn for them, hate them, and oppose them, by every means in their power. If their endeavors to promote national reformation are unsuccessful, the guilt does not lie at their door. Justice, therefore, forbids that they should share in the punishment, which this guilt brings down. As they have separated themselves from others by their conduct, it requires that

a mark of separation and deliverance should be set upon them by the hand of a righteous God. Hence the plea of Abraham with regard to Sodom, a plea of which God tacitly allowed the force. Far be it from thee to destroy the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? It is true, that the characters, of whom we are speaking, have, like others, violated the law of God, and are by nature children of wrath, and exposed to its awful curse. But however guilty they may be as individuals, in the sight of a heart-searching God, they are blameless, considered merely as members of a community, and it is in this light only that they are here considered. Justice itself, therefore, requires, that they should be spared, and there is no doubt that God often suspends the punishment merited by guilty nations, lest the righteous should be involved in their destruction. Witness the preservation of guilty Zoar for the sake of Lot, and the declaration of the destroying angel, I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.

The truth of the proposition we are considering, may be inferred,

2. From God's holiness. As a holy God he cannot but love holiness; he cannot but love his own image; he cannot but love those who love him. But the characters, of whom we are speaking, evince by their conduct, that they do love God. They bear his image. His name is written in their

foreheads. Like the righteous God they love righteousness and hate and oppose iniquity. It is their love to God and their holy jealousy for the honor of his great name, which causes them to mourn when he is disobeyed and dishonored. His cause, his interest, his honor, they consider as their own. A holy God, therefore, will, nay, he must, display his approbation of holiness by placing upon them a mark of distinction. While he loves holiness, while he loves himself, he cannot but love them, and cause all things to work together for their good.

The truth of this assertion we infer,

3. From his faithfulness. God has said, Them that honor me I will honor. But none honor him more highly than those, who appear openly and resolutely on his side, in opposition to sin. His truth, his faithfulness then requires, that he should honor them by placing upon them some mark of distinction. Besides, those who are affected with the sins of mankind in the manner described above, exhibit the most infallible proof, that they are the genuine disciples of Christ, and the real children of God. Like their heavenly Father and their divine Redeemer, they are grieved with the sins of rebellious man. They have complied with the command which says, Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate; and I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. But if they are children, then heirs; heirs of God, of all the exceeding great and precious promises,

which are given us in Christ Jesus; promises, which the eternal purpose and solemn oath of God bind him to fulfil. He has provided for them chambers of protection. His name is a strong tower, into which they flee, and are safe; and to this place of refuge he invites them. Come, my people, enter into thy chambers, and hide thyself for a little moment, till the indignation be overpast.

Thus it appears, that the justice, the holiness, and the faithfulness of God, unitedly bind him to set a mark of deliverance on those, who are suitably affected with the sins of their fellow creatures. But these are the perfections, which, as sinners, we have the greatest reason to fear. If then they secure our safety, how safe must we be.

Lastly—That God actually does set a mark of deliverance on such characters, is evident from various facts recorded in scripture. See, for instance, Noah, that preacher of righteousness, saved in the midst of a drowning world. See Lot, whose righteous soul was grieved and vexed with the wickedness of the Sodomites, snatched as a brand from the burning storm, which overthrew the cities of the plain. See Elijah, who was jealous for the honor of the Lord of Hosts, fed by ravens, when all his countrymen were suffering the miseries of drought and famine. See Jeremiah, Baruch, and Ebed-melech, escaping unhurt from the perils of fire and sword, when Jerusalem was taken by storm; and the disciples of our Lord, many years after, saved by his warnings from the Roman sword, while their

countrymen were destroyed. And though the age of miracles has passed away, yet had we an inspired history of the world from the days of the apostles, we should doubtless find recorded many equally striking proofs of God's care of his people; for it is still true, to adopt the language of St. Peter, that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly, and to reserve the unjust to the day of judgment to be punished. Will it be objected to this statement, that facts equally strong may be adduced on the other side; facts, which prove that God does not always thus deliver his people? We allow it. We allow that the real friends of God often drink deeply of the cup of affliction, which is put into the hands of sinful nations? But why is it so? It is because they first partake of their sins. It is because they do not bear a public testimony for God, and oppose as they ought the progress of vice and infidelity. They suffer themselves to be entangled by that fear of man, which bringeth a snare, and to be guided by the heaven-distrusting counsels and temporizing policy of that earthly, sensual wisdom, which is too often miscalled prudence. They conduct in such a manner, as to leave it doubtful whether they are the real children of God; and, therefore, he treats them in such a manner, as often causes them and others to doubt whether he is their Father. Were they always suitably affected with the sins which prevail around them, they would much less frequently share in the calamities which those sins occasion. But it will perhaps be said,

that many of the most bold and faithful servants of God and opposers of vice, have suffered even unto blood striving against sin. We grant it, but still it is true, that the mark of God was upon them. It appeared in those divine consolations, which raised them far above suffering, and the fear of death, and enabled them to rejoice and glory in tribulation. Did not Stephen exhibit this mark, when his murderers saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel? Did not Paul and Silas display it, when at midnight their joy broke forth, in the hearing of their fellow prisoners, in rapturous ascriptions, and songs of praise? Did not some of the martyrs display it, when they exclaimed in the flames, We feel no more pain, than if reposing on a bed of roses? If we now seldom see this mark of God set upon his children, it is only because the fires of persecution are extinguished, and because such christians as Stephen, and Paul, and the martyrs, are no longer to be found in the church.

But however God may sometimes see fit to expose such as truly mourn for the prevalence of sin, to sufferings in this world, he will most certainly set a mark of deliverance upon them in the world to come. The Son of God, clothed in the linen garments of his priestly office, has sprinkled them with his blood, which, like the blood of the passover, is a signal for the destroying angel to pass them by. He has set upon them a mark, not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, by whom they are sealed to the day of eternal redemption.

Thus they bear the mark of the Lamb, and have their Father's name written in their foreheads, while their great Intercessor bears their names engraven in his book of life, and upon the palms of his hands; and neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall erase them.

IMPROVEMENT.

My hearers, the subject we have been considering, at all times interesting, is rendered peculiarly so to us by the circumstances in which we are placed. We live in a day, when the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and the desolating flood, after laying waste many nations and kingdoms in its progress, has at length reached our shores, and where it will stop God only knows. We have, however, but too much reason to expect the worst. The same sins which have ruined other nations, and which, wherever they exist, provoke the vengeance of offended heaven, evidently prevail among us in an alarming degree, and give us just occasion to fear, that, since we resemble the old world in its vices, we shall share in its plagues. And even if God in mercy should avert merited ruin, it is certain that we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body. It is, therefore, infinitely important for us, both in a temporal and in a religious view, to ascertain whether we are in the number of those, upon whom God has set a mark

of deliverance, that his destroying angel may not touch them. From our subject we may learn this. If we are in the number of those who sigh and cry for all the abominations that are committed among us, God has certainly set upon us a mark of deliverance and salvation; but if not, if we contemplate them with indifference, or while we profess to lament, make no exertions to repress them; we have reason to expect nothing but a mark of reprobation. Permit me then, my hearers, to ask, how are you affected with the sins which prevail among us? That there are many such sins, sins sufficient to excite and justify our most pungent grief, you need not be told. You cannot but be aware, that throughout our country, vice and impiety are awfully prevalent; that God's name is most daringly profaned; that his day is by multitudes dishonored and neglected; that his friends and institutions are ridiculed and despised; that the whirlpool of intemperance is engulfing its thousands and tens of thousands, and that the soul is almost universally neglected and undone. The cry of our sins, like that of Sodom and Nineveh, has long since ascended up before God. My hearers, how are you affected with these things? Are you more disposed to weep for our national sins, than for the miseries which we feel, and the dangers which we fear? Are you endeavoring, by your example, your exertions, and your prayers, to repress the progress of vice and impiety within your sphere of action; and do you appear openly

on the Lord's side, as the bold, unwavering, determined friends of religion and morality? These are questions of infinite importance, but they are questions which conscience alone can answer. To every man's conscience, then, we appeal, and ask, should God, preparatory to our destruction, as a people, send a messenger into this house, to set a mark on all who are suitably affected with the prevailing sins of the age, on whose foreheads would the delivering mark appear? Would it, I address the question to every hearer, would it appear on thine? We are happy to have it in our power to remark, that a partial answer to these questions is afforded by the occasion which has called us together. The existence of the society which I now address, affords, at least, presumptive evidence, that there are some present, who do not contemplate with indifference, the progress of vice and impiety; and its members exhibit, at least, one of the characteristic features of the persons described in our text. We would hope, that the other features necessary to complete the character, are not wanting; and that, while they are unitedly endeavoring to check the progress of vice by their exertions, they are individually aiming to advance the same object by their example and their prayers. My brethren, if this hope be well founded, our subject affords you encouragement, ample as your most enlarged desires. It assures you, that he, who humbles himself to behold what is done in heaven, notices and approves the sorrow, with which you contemplate

sin, either in yourselves or others, and the exertions which you are making to repress its progress. The mark of the eternal God is upon you. The destroying angel is forbidden to touch you; whatever may befal our country or the world, you are safe as omnipotence can render you. The new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, is your destined habitation, where those sins, which you now hate and oppose, shall no longer molest you, and where you shall reap the glorious rewards, which the Captain of our salvation has prepared for them that overcome. Nor is this all. The cause in which you are engaged is as honorable, and its success as certain, as the rewards of victory are glorious. It is the cause of truth, of religion, of God; the cause in which all holy beings are engaged; the cause in which the Son of God laid down his life. It will be finally victorious. Will it be descending too low, if I add, it is also the cause of our common country. It is on the exertions of the friends of morality and religion alone, that its deliverance from present calamities, and its future welfare depend. It is in the field of conflict between virtue and vice, between religion and impiety, that our enemies are to be repelled; that peace is to be conquered for us. One victory gained here, will do more for us than many on the ocean or the land; and the most encouraging circumstance attending our present situation, is, that a faithful few are to be found in different parts of our land,

who are willing to fight the battles of the Lord, and come up to his help against the mighty.

Go on, then my brethren, and prosper; secure of the good wishes and co-operation of all the real friends of God, and of man, and of our country; nay more, secure of the blessing and assistance of him, who has promised, that, when the enemy comes in as a flood, his Spirit shall lift up a standard against him. We will only add the address of the prophet to Asa and his people, while engaged in the work of national reformation with its happy effect. The Lord is with you, while ye be with him. Be strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. When Asa heard these words, he took courage, and put away all abominations out of the land. May God grant that you feel encouraged in a similar manner to repress, with a prudent and vigorous hand, every abomination which shall attempt to raise its baleful head among you.

And are there any present, who cannot cordially unite in this prayer; any, who contemplate the formation and the exertions of this society with an unfriendly eye; any, who, instead of feeling disposed to sigh and cry on account of the prevalence of vice and irreligion, are disposed to consider it as a proof of weakness or superstition to be thus affected? If any such there are, permit me to ask, ought not the creatures, the subjects, the children of God to mourn, when their Creator, their Sovereign, their Father, is dishonored? Ought not the

friends of our Redeemer to feel grieved, when he is neglected and crucified afresh? Ought not all, who love their country, to lament, when they see the same sins prevailing among us, which have already drawn down the vengeace of heaven on so many once flourishing kingdoms! * * * * *

SERMON XX.

THE CHRISTIAN MANNER OF EXPRESSING GRATITUDE.

II. TIMOTHY I. 16, 17, 18.

THE LORD GIVE MERCY UNTO THE HOUSE OF ONESIPHORUS; FOR HE OFT REFRESHED ME, AND WAS NOT ASHAMED OF MY CHAIN. BUT WHEN HE WAS IN ROME, HE SOUGHT ME OUT VERY DILIGENTLY, AND FOUND ME. THE LORD GRANT UNTO HIM, THAT HE MAY FIND MERCY OF THE LORD IN THAT DAY.

THE enemies of Christianity, while stating its supposed defects, have asserted, that it recognizes neither patriotism nor friendship as virtues; that it discountenances, or at least does not encourage, the exercise of gratitude to human benefactors; and that its spirit is unfriendly to many of the finer feelings and sensibilities of our nature. But these assertions prove only that those who make them are unacquainted with the religion, which they blindly assail. Nothing more is necessary to show that they are groundless, than a reference to the character of St. Paul. This distinguished apostle of Jesus Christ was, in a degree which has seldom, if ever, been equalled, imbued with the spirit, and controlled by the influence, of that religion, which he at once inculcated and exemplified. Yet we find in his writings the most touching expressions, and in his life the most striking exhibitions, of love to his countrymen, friendship, gratitude, and indeed

of every sentiment and feeling, which gives either nobleness or loveliness to human character. We readily admit, however, or rather we assert it as an important truth, that his religion, though it extinguished none of these feelings, modified them all. It infused into them its own spirit, regulated their exercises and expressions by its own views, and thus stamped upon them a new and distinctive character. It baptized them, if I may be allowed the expression, with the Holy Ghost, in the name of Jesus Christ. Hence, the apostle expressed neither his patriotism, nor his friendship, nor his gratitude, precisely as he would have done, before his conversion to christianity.

These remarks, so far at least as they relate to gratitude, are illustrated and verified by the passage before us, in which he expresses his sense of obligation to a human benefactor. This benefactor was Onesiphorus, who appears to have been an Ephesian of wealth and distinction, and who had in various ways, and on different occasions, manifested a generous concern for the apostle's welfare. Especially had he manifested such a concern, when St. Paul, oppressed by powerful enemies, forsaken by those who ought to have assisted him, and struggling without success to regain his liberty, lay bound in fetters at Rome. While he was in this destitute and friendless condition, borne down by a power, which it seemed impossible for him to resist, Onesiphorus generously espoused his cause, sought him out very diligently and found him, sup-

plied his wants from his own stores, and was not ashamed to be known as the friend and patron, of a poor despised prisoner in chains. This unexpected kindness from a stranger, a foreigner, on whom he had no natural claims,—kindness, too, displayed at a time, when cool friends prudently kept at a distance, and many of his own countrymen were among his bitterest enemies, made a deep impression upon the grateful heart of St. Paul. The gratitude, which he felt, it was natural that he should express; nor was there any thing in his religion, which forbade him to express it. But though his religion forbade neither the exercise nor the expression of gratitude, it taught him to express it in such a manner, as became a christian, an apostle, a servant of that Master, whose kingdom is not of this world. He did not therefore idolize his benefactor; he did not load him with flattering applauses: but from the fulness of his heart he poured out a prayer for him to that God, who alone could reward him, as the apostle wished him to be rewarded. In this prayer he asked for him and his family the same favor, which, as we learn from his life and writings, he supremely desired and sought for himself. This was an interest in God's pardoning mercy. The Lord, he cries, give mercy unto his house. The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

It is more than possible, that, to some persons this mode of expressing gratitude will appear frigid, unmeaning, and unsatisfactory. They will regard

it as a very cheap and easy method of requiting a benefactor; and, were the case their own, they would probably prefer a small pecuniary recompense, or an honorary reward, to all the prayers which even an apostle could offer on their behalf. It is certain, however, that such persons estimate the value of objects very erroneously, and that their religious views and feelings differ very widely from those which were entertained by St. Paul. But so far as any man's religious views differ from those, which he entertained, they must differ from truth; for the apostle, it will be recollected, was guided by inspiration; his religious views were imparted to him by the unerring Spirit of God; they must, therefore, have been in perfect accordance with truth. It is surely then most important, that we should ascertain what they were, in order that we may make them our own. What they were respecting some most interesting subjects, we may learn from the passage before us. From this passage we may also learn, in what manner it becomes the disciples and ministers of Christ to express their gratitude to human benefactors. And no one, who shall adopt the religious views, by which St. Paul was influenced, can fail to perceive that the method, which he employed for this purpose, was most worthy of himself, and most wisely adapted to promote the best interests of the friend, to whom he felt himself indebted. What these views were let us now endeavor to ascertain.

In the petition, which was offered by the apostle

for his benefactor, mention is made of a day to which that petition has reference. The Lord grant unto him, that he may find mercy of the Lord in *that day*. The mode of expression here employed is, in some respects, peculiar, and worthy of remark. It is a mode of expression, which men never adopt, except when they speak of some subject, of which their hearts are full. While it seems intended to designate a particular day, it furnishes no mark or description, by which the day referred to can be ascertained. The same expression is, however, frequently used in other parts of the inspired volume, and from the connection in which it is invariably found we may infer with certainty what day is intended by it. It is 'the great day, for which all other days were made,' the last day of time and the first day of eternity, the day of general judgment and retribution, in which the mighty Maker, and Sovereign, and Judge of the universe, will summon all intelligent creation before his tribunal, and subject them to a trial, on the result of which, their eternal destiny will depend. This day is elsewhere styled, the day of the Lord, the great day of his wrath, and the great day of God Almighty. It is the day of the Lord, says an apostle, in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth with all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. When that day shall arrive, the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the

archangel, and with the trump of God, and every eye shall see him coming in the clouds with power and great glory; and all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. Then shall be realized what St. John saw in vision. I saw, he says, a great white throne, and him who sat upon it, before whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works. Such, my hearers, is the day here intended, and such are some of its attending circumstances and events. To the mind of St. Paul, who possessed that faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, this day, with all its infinitely glorious and tremendous realities, was, in effect, ever present and visible. His mental eye, aided by the light, and strengthened by the energies of inspiration, even then saw its dawn in the distant horizon. To that day his thoughts and affections were chained. With reference to that day he was constantly acting. To secure mercy for himself and for his fellow sinners in that day, was the great object for which he lived, and labored, and suffered, and for the sake of which he counted not even his life dear. No wonder, then, that, when he had occasion to mention such a day as

this, a day, which thus occupied and engrossed his whole soul, he should style it simply, that day, and take it for granted that every hearer would perceive at once, what day he intended. No wonder, that the transcendent brightness of such a day, should, in his view, eclipse the light of other days, and that he should speak of it as if it were the only day which deserved the name. And no wonder, that, with such a day in his eye, he did not pray that his benefactor might be recompensed by the enjoyment of wealth, and honor, and prosperity, in the present world. To his mind, engrossed as it was by far nobler objects, all these things, and indeed all which this world can afford, must have appeared worthless and empty indeed. And how could he ask for his friend a portion, with which he would not have satisfied himself; how could he ask for him a portion in this world only, when his inspired eye saw the flames, in which it is destined to be consumed, just ready to kindle around it, and wrap it in the blaze of a general conflagration! Might it not rather be expected, that he would ask for him a favor connected with the great day, which he saw approaching; a favor, the bestowal of which would secure his safety amidst all its perils, and his happiness forever? Such a favor he did ask. And that he should ask it, was a natural consequence of the religious views, which he entertained. He knew that his friend was an accountable creature, in a state of probation for eternity, that he, in common with the rest of mankind,

must appear at the bar of God in the judgment day ; and that the sentence, which he should then receive, would either raise him to the enjoyment of happiness inconceivable, or plunge him into wretchedness inexpressible. Knowing these things, how could he do otherwise than breathe out a fervent prayer, that his benefactor might be prepared to receive a favorable sentence, and find mercy of the Lord, his judge, at that day.

But what is the precise import of the petition, that he might then find mercy, and what did it imply? An answer to these questions will throw much additional light on the views, which were entertained by the apostle, when he uttered the prayer before us. Mercy, as exercised by a judge, or a sovereign, is the opposite of justice. It is shewn only, when the guilty are spared, or when they are treated more favorably than they deserved. Its brightest display is made, when a criminal, justly condemned to die, is pardoned. God, the universal Sovereign and Judge, shews mercy, when he pardons those, who were justly doomed by his righteous law to the second death; that death, from which there is no resurrection. To pray that any one may find mercy of him at the judgment day, is to pray that he may then be pardoned, or saved from deserved punishment, and accepted and treated as if he were righteous. St. Paul, when he prayed that Onesiphorus might find mercy of his Judge at that day, must then have believed, that he would at that day need mercy or par-

don. And if so, he must have believed, that, in the sight of God, he was guilty; for by the guilty alone can pardoning mercy be needed. The innocent need nothing but justice. They may stand boldly and safely on the ground of their own merits. But the apostle well knew, that, on this ground, not a single individual of the human race can stand before God in judgment. He knew, for he often declared, that all, without a single exception, have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and that in his sight no man living can be justified by any performances or merits of his own. He knew, that, however blameless or excellent any man's character may appear in the view of men, he has sinned against the statute book of heaven, against the Supreme Legislator's great law of love, that law, which binds him to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and his neighbor as himself. He knew, that, when tried by this law before an omniscient, heart-searching Judge, he must inevitably be found guilty, and receive a sentence of condemnation, and that mercy alone could then save him. Indeed these are among the fundamental truths of that gospel, which the apostle made it the great business of his life to proclaim. To these truths every fact and doctrine of that gospel bears testimony. Why was a Saviour provided for all men, if all men are not sinners? Why did that Saviour command his gospel to be preached to all men, if all men do not need salvation? Why is mercy offered

to all men, why are all men exhorted to seek it, if all do not need mercy? And these truths, which had been revealed to him and engraven upon his heart by the Spirit of God, the apostle could neither disbelieve nor forget; nor could he suffer himself to be so far blinded by admiration, or friendship, or gratitude, as to except even his benefactor from their universal application. No; kind, and generous, and noble, as was the disposition, which that benefactor had manifested, and disposed as the apostle must have been to view his character in the most favorable light, he knew it could not meet the demands of God's perfect law. He could not conceal from himself the unpleasant truth, that his friend was, like other men, a sinner, and that as such he would need mercy of the Lord at that day. And had Onesiphorus distinguished himself as a benefactor, not to himself only, but to his country; had he sacrificed much, and hazarded every thing to secure her liberty, the apostle would still have entertained the same views respecting his character and situation in the sight of God. He entertained, and often expressed, the same views respecting himself. He knew, that, notwithstanding the blamelessness of his external conduct, his zeal and fidelity in preaching the gospel, and all his unexampled sacrifices, labors, and sufferings in the service of Christ, he should still need mercy at that day; that justice would condemn, and that mercy alone could save him. And were he now alive, were he a native of our coun-

try, and were he standing in the midst of us with all the feelings and partialities of his countrymen glowing in his bosom, he would believe, and would not hesitate to declare, that our own Washington, beloved, admired, and revered as he justly was, and is, will need the mercy of his judge at that day.

Are there any present, whose feelings revolt at this assertion? Let them then select the most illustrious individual of our race; let that individual be, if they please, Washington himself; let them suppose him to approach, with a fearless air, the judgment seat of the Eternal, and say to him who sits upon it,—I demand to be exempted from every expression of thy displeasure, and to have everlasting life conferred on me as my due. I have earned it, I deserve it, justice awards it to me; give me but justice, and I ask no more. Reserve thy mercy for such as need it. Would you not strongly reprobate language like this? Then must you acknowledge, that no man can claim any thing on the ground of justice; that all, without exception, will need mercy at that day.

A distinguished modern philosopher, Adam Smith, well known by his celebrated treatise on the Wealth of Nations, has some remarks relative to this subject, which are so just and apposite, that you will readily excuse me for quoting them. "Man," says this writer, "when about to appear before a being of infinite perfection, can feel but little confidence in his own merit, or in the imperfect propriety of his own conduct. To such a

being, he can scarce imagine, that his littleness and weakness should ever seem to be the proper object either of esteem or regard. But he can easily conceive how the numberless violations of duty, of which he has been guilty, should render him the object of aversion and punishment; nor can he see any reason why the divine indignation should not be let loose without any restraint, upon so vile an insect as he is sensible that he himself must appear to be. If he would still hope for happiness he is conscious that he cannot *demand* it from the *justice*, but that he must entreat it from the *mercy* of God. Repentance, sorrow, humiliation, contrition at the thought of his past conduct, are, upon this account, the sentiments which become him, and seem to be the only means, which he has left, of appeasing that wrath which he has justly provoked. He even distrusts the efficacy of all these, and naturally fears, lest the wisdom of God should not, like the weakness of man, be prevailed upon to spare the crime, by the most importunate lamentations of the criminal. Some other intercession, some other sacrifice, some other atonement, he imagines, must be made for him, beyond what he himself is capable of making, before the purity of the divine justice can be reconciled to his manifold offences." Such, my hearers, is the language of a writer, whom no one, that is acquainted with his character, can suspect of superstition, or weakness, or of entertaining too favorable views of Christianity.

But to return—It may, perhaps, be said, if the apostle's views were such as have now been described, if he believed that justice must pronounce a sentence of condemnation on all without exception, on what could he found a hope, that either himself, or his benefactor, or any other man, will find mercy of the Lord at that day? Indeed, how could he, while he entertained such views, ask mercy either for himself or for others, without being guilty of irreverent presumption? How could he, a sinful worm of the dust, dare request the inflexibly just and holy Sovereign of the universe, to pronounce from his judgment seat, a sentence more favorable than impartial justice required, or than it would seem to allow? And when he presented such a request, did he not appear to ask, in effect, that the Judge of all the earth would cease to do right; that he would deviate from the path of equity, sacrifice his justice, and sully his yet unspotted character, for the sake of sparing guilty creatures, whom law and justice condemned? These questions are perfectly reasonable and proper, and it would be impossible to answer them in such a manner as to justify the apostle, were not a satisfactory answer furnished by the gospel of Jesus Christ. That gospel reveals to us a glorious plan, devised by infinite wisdom, in which the apparently conflicting claims of justice and mercy are perfectly reconciled. It informs us that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; that God so loved the

world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It informs us, that in consequence of the atonement, which this Son of his love has made, he can be just, and yet justify, or show mercy to him, that believeth in Jesus. And it assures us, that to every one, who truly believes in him, abundant mercy shall be shown. On this ground alone the apostle rested all his own hopes of finding mercy at that day. On this ground alone did he found a hope, that his benefactor might then find mercy. On this ground alone, did he dare ask that mercy might be granted him. And his petition, that he might find mercy, involves a request, that he might be induced to become, if he were not already such, a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ, and be found among his faithful followers at that day; for well did the apostle know, that, unless he were so, he must inevitably perish without mercy. He knew, that, as all the light and warmth, which we receive from the sun, come to us through the medium of its beams, so all the mercy, which God will ever dispense to men, must come to them through the medium of his Son Jesus Christ, who is the brightness, the effulgence, or shining forth of his glory. Take away the beams of the sun, and you cut us off from all the benefits which we derive from that luminary. Take away Jesus Christ the Saviour, and you cut us off from all participation of God's mercy, and from all the benefits which that mercy bestows upon a guilty world.

And the man, who shuts out Jesus Christ from his heart, shuts out the sunshine of God's mercy from himself, and, to use the language of an apostle, has neither part nor lot in the matter.

This leads us to remark, farther, that though the apostle believed all men will need mercy of the Lord at that day, he did not believe that all will then find mercy. This is evidently and strongly implied in the petition, which we are considering. Would he have thought it necessary to pray that Onesiphorus might find mercy, had he believed that all will find mercy? Would he have asked for his friend, his benefactor, a favor, which, he believed, will be conferred indiscriminately upon all? This would have been worse than idle. It would have been unworthy of himself, and a mockery of his friend. It would have been like praying that he might have a portion of the air, and the light, which are common to all. When he prayed that his benefactor might find mercy, he intimated that it was, at least, possible, that he might fail of finding it. And when he prayed that the Lord would grant unto him that he might find mercy, he evidently prayed for a favor, which he did not suppose would be granted to all. Indeed, he knew, for he asserts, that all do not believe. And he knew that those, who do not believe, shall not see life, but that the wrath of God abideth on them.

My hearers, I have given you a brief sketch of the apostle's religious views, so far as they are expressed or implied in the passage under considera-

tion. And now let me ask, could he, with such views, have expressed his gratitude in a manner more worthy of himself, or more indicative of a wise and affectionate concern for the welfare of his benefactor, than by offering for him this petition? Would not the favor, which it requests, have been cheaply purchased by Onesiphorus at the expense of all his earthly possessions? And can any man, whose religious views resemble those of St. Paul, express affection for his children, or concern for his friends, or gratitude to his benefactors, more clearly and consistently, than by beseeching God to grant unto them that they might find mercy of the Lord in the great day?

It would be improper to conclude this discourse without reminding you, that, if Onesiphorus, notwithstanding all his generous disposition and beneficient actions, will need mercy of the Lord at that day, then each of you my hearers will certainly need it. Yes, mortal, accountable, sinful creature,

> That awful day will surely come,
> The appointed hour makes haste,
> When thou must stand before thy Judge,
> And pass the solemn test.

And O, how greatly wilt thou then need mercy, when, stripped of all thy possessions, of all thy friends, thou shalt stand a naked, trembling, helpless creature, before the tribunal of thy God! How wilt thou need mercy at that great and terrible day, in which, as inspiration declares, the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven; and the heaven

shall depart as a scroll, and every mountain be moved out of its place ; and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and the bond and the free, shall attempt to hide themselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains, and shall say unto the mountains and to the rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ? He, he alone, who finds mercy. And he alone will find mercy then, who seeks it now, and who seeks it in the only way, in which it can ever be found,—by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not then found to have believed in him, you will find no mercy; and, unless you find mercy, it were better far better for you, that you had never been born. Do you ask, for what shall we need mercy ? I answer, if for nothing else, yet for the neglect with which you have treated the Saviour, to whom you are so deeply indebted. In former ages, God found reason to say to his creatures, A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a Father, where is mine honor ? and if I be a Master, where is my fear ? saith the Lord of hosts. With at least equal force and propriety may our Saviour now say, Men are grateful to their benefactors and deliverers ; but if I am such, where are the proofs of that gratitude which they owe to me ? I see triumphal arches raised, and costly preparations made, and

loud acclamations poured forth, to welcome a human benefactor.* But where are the grateful returns which I had reason to expect from those, for whom I descended from heaven, and suffered and died? My hearers, contrast your obligations to the Saviour with those which you owe the man who has recently visited us; compare the proofs of gratitude, which the latter has received, with those which have been shewn to Jesus Christ, and then say, whether our Saviour has not reason to complain; whether we have not reason to feel guilty and ashamed. Is it not, O is it not but too evident that our God and Redeemer hold, at most, but the second place in our estimation, and that we honor the creature more than the Creator? If you think, that we have not rewarded our earthly benefactor more than he deserves,—and that we have, I am not disposed to assert,—you must surely allow, that we reward our heavenly Benefactor infinitely less than he deserves. There is not, probably, a habitation or a heart in our country, which would not be thrown open to welcome the former. But, O, how many hearts are shut against the latter, even when he comes and knocks for admission. Thousands, and tens of thousands flock to see the former; but how few, comparatively, wish for an acquaintance with the latter. To sit at table with the former, is regarded as an honor and a privilege, for which men are willing to pay dear;

* La Fayette—This Sermon was preached on the occasion of his visit to Portland.

while the table of Jesus Christ, though spread with a banquet of God's own providing, is comparatively forsaken.

My hearers, can these things be otherwise than highly displeasing to God? Can he see the Son of his love treated with such neglect and ingratitude by creatures, whom he died to save, and not be greatly offended? And will not such conduct appear, even to us, to need pardoning mercy, when he, whom we have thus requited, shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory? Then our triumphal arches, our expensive preparations, and all our expressions of gratitude to a human benefactor, will rise up in judgment against us, to condemn us, if we shall be found to have neglected the infinitely great, and generous, and condescending Benefactor of our race. My hearers, in this respect we are all in a greater or less degree guilty, and have all cause for repentance. Who can say, with truth, in this respect I have made my heart clean? Who can impartially review the manner, in which he has requited his Saviour, and then dare to say that he shall not need mercy?

My hearers, let me entreat you to seek that mercy now. Let me charge you, by all that is glorious, and terrible, and awful in the solemnities of that day, to seek that mercy now; for he, who neglects to seek it now, will not find it then. To him, who rejects it now, it will not be offered then; for him, who refuses to ask it now, even an

apostle might then plead in vain. Let us then send many humble and urgent invitations to our Saviour, to bless us with a gracious visit. And should he deign to favor us with his presence, let every heart be ready to receive him; let every voice be prepared to greet him; and let old age, and manhood, and youth emulate each other in shouting him welcome, and bringing to him the tribute, which is due to our greatest and best Benefactor.

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SERMON XXI.

THE TIMELY PRESENCE AND SALUTATION OF JESUS.

LUKE XXIV. 36.

AND AS THEY THUS SPAKE, JESUS HIMSELF STOOD IN THE MIDST OF THEM, AND SAITH UNTO THEM, PEACE BE UNTO YOU.

WHEN we are studying the character of a person, of whom we know little, but whom we have particular reasons for wishing to know thoroughly, every part of his past and present conduct becomes, in our view, highly interesting. We wish to be acquainted with his whole history, even with the incidents of his childhood and early youth, that, from what he was then, we may infer what he, probably, is now. And yet, to infer what any one is, from what he has been in former years, may often lead to very erroneous conclusions; respecting his character; for man is a changeable being, and there are, comparatively, few persons, whose lives are all of a piece. The promising child, the amiable youth, does not always prove a valuable man; and, on the other hand, sometimes, though much less frequently, the man renounces the vices and follies of youth, and becomes, unexpectedly, an estimable character. To our Saviour, however, these remarks are in no degree applicable. It is always safe to infer what he is, from what he

once was. If we can ascertain what he was at any former period, we shall ascertain what he is now; for inspiration assures us, that he is, yesterday, to-day, and forever, the same. And, blessed be God, we may easily ascertain what he was during his residence in our world; for the inspired records of his life are before us, and they are sufficiently particular to give us a clear view of his sentiments, feelings and character. This fact renders these records particularly interesting to every one, who counts all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord; who wishes to be thoroughly acquainted with the Saviour, to whose care he commits his soul, and on whom he founds all his hopes. Of this Saviour, and of the manner in which he treats his disciples, we may learn something from the passage before us. It describes the first manifestation, which he made of himself to his church, after his resurrection. He had, indeed, previously appeared to individuals among them; but not until this occasion was he seen by them all. Now he stood at once, unexpectedly, in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.

In meditating on this passage, let us consider,

I. The character of the visit, which Christ here made to his church; and,

II. The time, when the visit was made.

With reference to the character of the visit, we may remark, that the visits, which Christ makes to his churches, are of two kinds. He sometimes

comes in anger, to chastise them. In this manner he threatened to visit some of the Asiatic churches. To the church at Ephesus he says, I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place, unless thou repent. And to the church of Sardis, If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, that is, suddenly, and unexpectedly; and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come upon thee. At other times, he visits his churches in a gracious manner, to comfort, animate, and bless them. The visit mentioned in our text was of this kind. He came, not in anger, but in love; came in his own beloved and appropriate characters of Saviour, Friend and Brother. This is evident, in the first place, from the language in which he addressed them; Peace be with you. This was the customary form of friendly salutation among the Jews, and the use of it, by a visiter, was equivalent to an assurance, that he came as a friend. Indeed it probably conveyed far more meaning to their ears, than it does to ours; for the word peace as used by the Jews, was a term of very extensive signification. It was considered as including all blessings of every kind. Hence, when they said to any one, Peace be with you,—it was the same as saying, may every blessing be yours; or, may happiness attend you. And though the salutation was, doubtless, used by many, as our customary expressions of friendship and civility too often are, in an insincere and unmeaning manner, yet we may be sure, that in such a manner it would never be

used by our Saviour. And while this language, as used by him, meant all which it seemed to mean; it was, in his lips, something more than the expression of a wish, something more than even a prayer, that peace might be with them. He had just returned from the invisible world; that world, which men naturally regard with dread. In these circumstances, by saying, Peace be with you, he did in effect assure them, that there was peace between them and the invisible world; between them and the God, who governs that world. Nor was this all. He had it in his own power to give the peace which he wished them to enjoy; for all power, in heaven and on earth, was now committed to him. In these circumstances the salutation, Peace be with you, was equivalent to an authoritative declaration, that Peace should be with them. He had said to them, just before his crucifixion, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; and this dying bequest he now renewed and confirmed. We may remark, further, that the three blessings, which the apostles usually asked for the churches, were grace, mercy, and peace. But the last of these blessings includes, or implies the two former; for to sinful creatures, such as we are, there can be no peace, without grace to sanctify them, and mercy to pardon them. This our Saviour well knew. Hence, when he said, Peace be unto you, he did in effect assure them of an interest in his grace and mercy. If farther proof, that this was a gracious visit, were wanting, we might find it in

the context. We there learn, that, at this visit, he enlightened the understandings of the disciples, increased their religious knowledge, banished their doubts, fears and anxieties, strengthened their faith, revived their fainting hopes, and filled them with wonder and joy. These surely were works of grace, and these, we may add, are precisely the works which he still performs when he makes any of his churches a gracious visit.

Let us now consider,

II. The time, when this gracious visit was made.

1. We may remark, that it was made at a time, when the disciples were exceedingly unworthy of such a favor, and when they rather deserved to have been visited in anger. Since their last interview with their Master and Saviour, which took place at his table, and in the garden of Gethsemane, they had treated him in a very unkind and ungrateful manner. Though repeatedly warned by him to watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation, they had neglected the warning, they had yielded to temptation, they had proved unfaithful to their engagements, and, in a most pusillanimous manner, had forsaken him, nay, fled from him in his greatest extremity. Nay more, one of them had, with oaths and imprecations, denied that he knew him. In addition to these sins, they had all been guilty of criminal and inexcusable unbelief. Though he had repeatedly forewarned them of his approaching crucifixion, referred them to predictions of it in the Old Testament, and at the same

time assured them, that, on the third day, he would rise again, yet they forgot his warnings, disbelieved his assurances, and were, in consequence, plunged into the depths of despondency by his death. So obstinate was their incredulity, that they even refused to believe the testimony of those, to whom he had revealed himself on the morning of his resurrection. These were surely great sins; they must have been exceedingly painful and offensive to their Master; they rendered them most undeserving, not only of this gracious visit, but of ever being again numbered among his disciples. Yet instead of renouncing them, instead of treating them as they had treated him, he comes to visit them, and the first sentence which he utters is, Peace be unto you. O, if they had any feeling, how must this unmerited kindness from their injured Master have shamed them, and cut them to the heart! No reproaches or threatenings would have been one half so overwhelming, or so hard to bear. While contemplating his conduct, we may well exclaim with David, Is this the manner of men, O Lord? No; it is the manner of Christ alone.

2. This visit was made at a time, when the church was very imperfectly prepared for it, and when very few among them expected it, or had any hope of such a favor. It is true, indeed, that a few individuals among them were in some good measure prepared for it. Peter had repented of his fall, and wept over it in bitterness of soul, and to him Christ had previously appeared, as he had

also to two others of the brethren, and to several of the female disciples. And some, who had not yet seen him, were so far convinced by their testimony, that their unbelief and despondency began to give way. But the great body of them appear to have been still incredulous, and by no means prepared for such a visit, or disposed to expect it. That they were so, is evident from the fact, that, even after their Master had appeared among them, and spoken to them, they would scarcely believe the testimony of their own senses. He was obliged to expostulate with them, to shew them his hands and his feet, bearing the scars of the cross, and to partake of food in their presence, before they would be convinced that it was indeed he himself. It is however possible, and perhaps not improbable, that this backwardness to believe, was occasioned, in part, by a conviction of their own great unworthiness. They could not but recollect how they had forsaken him when he was in the hands of his enemies, though they had but just before promised never to forsake him. And this recollection, with the feelings of conscious guilt, which it must have occasioned, might perhaps lead them to suppose, that, even if their injured Master were risen from the dead, he would not so soon favor them with a gracious visit, but would rather consider and treat them as persons unworthy to be his disciples. If they really entertained these feelings of conscious unworthiness, they were in some measure prepared for their Master's return to them; for he ever

regards those who feel most unworthy of his favors, as best prepared to receive them. Indeed he confers them on none, except such as are sensible of their own unworthiness; for such persons only will receive them with thankful humility, and duly appreciate the goodness, which leads him to bestow them.

3. The time, when Christ made this gracious visit to his church, was a time, in which it was very much needed. The faith, and hope, and courage of its members were reduced to the lowest point of depression, and unless revived by his presence, must soon have expired. One member after another, would have returned to his original occupation, and the church would have been scattered and become extinct. In these circumstances, it seemed indispensably necessary to the continued existence of the church, that something should be done, and done speedily, to revive it. And this gracious visit from Christ, was precisely what it needed for its revival. The sight of their beloved Master, raised from the dead, standing among them, and addressing them in language, which implied forgiveness, and expressed affection, revived their drooping spirits, banished their doubts and anxieties, rendered their faith stronger than it had ever been, and filled them with joy, and gratitude, and love. Nothing, then, could be more necessary, or more seasonable, than this gracious visit.

4. This visit was made at a time, when the church was employed in exerting the little life,

which yet remained among them, and in using proper means to increase it. Though assembling at this time was dangerous, so that they did not dare to meet openly, yet they did assemble, and they assembled in the character of Christ's disciples. This proved the existence of a bond of union among them, which drew them together. This bond of union consisted in sympathy of feeling. They all felt the same affections, the same apprehensions and anxieties, and the same sorrows, and all their thoughts centered in one object. This object was their crucified Master. Though they had forsaken him in a moment of temptation, yet they could not utterly renounce him. They could not give up all the hopes, which he had excited, nor cease to feel the affection, with which they had regarded him. His dead body, his grave, had still more charms for them, than any other object, and they found a melancholy pleasure in thinking of him, in recollecting his actions and discourses, and in speaking of these subjects to those who could sympathize with them. These feelings had prevented them from leaving Jerusalem and returning to Galilee, and the same feelings now drew them together. And while they were together, those few, to whom their Master had appeared, and whose faith had in consequence revived, were endeavoring to revive the faith and animate the hopes of their fellow disciples. They were assuring them, that they had seen him, and spoken with him, that they had not been deceived; and were also calling

their attention to the promises and predictions, which he had uttered respecting his resurrection. Thus those who had any faith in exercise, were doing all in their power to encourage those who had none; and those who had none, or who then seemed to have none, were listening to their brethren, half willing to be convinced, but still fluctuating between hope and fear. And it was at the very moment, while they were thus employed, that their Master stood in the midst of them and said, Peace be unto you. Yes, when they, who feared the Lord, thus spoke one to another, the Lord hearkened and heard it, and not only heard it, but appeared to bless them.

5. The gracious visit appears to have been made the very first time that the church met after Christ's resurrection. This circumstance is highly indicative of his affection for them, of his unwillingness to leave them mourning one moment longer than was necessary, and of his strong desire to be again in the midst of them. Since he had died for them, he loved them better, if possible, than before. They were endeared to him by the price which he had paid for them, by the agonies which they had cost him. Hence he longed to see them, to speak to them, to assure them of his forgiving, unchanging love, and turn their sorrow into joy. Should any father present, voluntarily encounter great hardships, sufferings, and dangers for the sake of saving his children from death or slavery, would he not earnestly wish, af-

ter their deliverance was effected and his own sufferings were ended, to see them again, that he might congratulate and rejoice with them; would they not now be dearer to him than ever; and would he not, when he met them, feel compensated for all that he had suffered? Similar, we may without presumption suppose, were the feelings of the man Christ Jesus, on this occasion.

We remark, lastly, that this gracious visit was made on the Lord's day, or Christian Sabbath. And the next visit, which he made to his church, was made on the next Lord's day. Thus early did he begin to put honor on the Christian Sabbath, and to intimate that it was designed to come in place of the seventh day, or Sabbath of the Jews. In a similar manner he has ever since continued to honor it. There has not, probably, a single Christian Sabbath passed, from that day to this, in which our Saviour has not graciously manifested himself, if not to whole churches, yet to individual disciples. Nor will this day pass without similar honors. In the midst of some little band of his disciples, our Master will to-day stand invisible and say, Peace be unto you. My brethren, I doubt not that every real Christian present will unite in saying, Would to God, that we might be thus favored. Would to God, that, when this church shall approach his table, he would come into the midst of it, and say, Peace be unto you. For those of you, who are Christ's real disciples, know experimentally, that though our Saviour is

no longer visibly present on earth, he still favors his church with his real presence, and manifests himself to them, as he does not to the world; and that where two or three only assemble in his name, there he is in the midst of them. You also know, that, without using an audible voice, he can effectually speak peace to a guilty conscience, and a trembling, doubting heart; and make fainting love revive, and faith and hope grow strong. But the great question is, Will he thus favor us? Have we any reason to hope that he will thus favor us, on the present occasion? It may be remarked, in reply to this question, that, in several particulars, the present situation of this church strikingly resembles that of the disciples, at the time, when they were favored with this gracious manifestation of their Master's presence.

In the first place, we are, as they were, exceedingly unworthy of such a favor. This, I trust, you are all ready to acknowledge. There cannot surely be an individual present, who will say, I am not unworthy of a gracious visit from Christ. To say nothing of our former sins, which were great, and numerous, and aggravated beyond all computation, have not the sins, which Christ has seen in us since our last approach to his table, been sufficient to render us forever unworthy of his presence? Have we not been unfaithful to our covenant engagements? have we not practically denied him? have we not, though often warned, neglected to watch and pray against temptation? have

we not suffered worldly-mindedness and unbelief to prevail in our hearts?

In the second place, are we not, like the disciples, far from being suitably prepared for such a visit? We are accustomed to suppose, and with truth, that thorough repentance, and deep humiliation for sin, are proper and necessary preparations for the gracious presence of Christ. But have we not reason to fear, that there is little of thorough repentance, or of deep humiliation among us? And does not unbelief prevail extensively? Do not many of you as little expect to see the Saviour coming to revive his work among us, as the disciples expected to see him among them, when they assembled on that evening?

In the third place, it is certain that we greatly need such a favor. The disciples scarcely needed it more than we do. It seems as if nothing but our Master's returning presence can save us from the power of spiritual death. Unless he shall ere long thus favor us, the evils, which now prevail, will prevail more extensively and more fatally; iniquity will abound more and more; love will become more and more cold, and scandals and divisions will soon be seen. But on this point of resemblance we need not enlarge. No disciple of Christ among us need be told, how greatly we need his gracious presence. To these remarks it is scarcely worth while to add, that we are now assembled in the character of Christ's disciples, and on the day, which he delights to honor. Thus far then, we may

trace a manifest resemblance between our situation and that of the disciples. But we can, I fear, trace it no farther. I fear that we do not lament the loss of Christ's presence, and lay it seriously to heart, as they did. We are ready indeed to acknowledge, that it is an evil, and that it ought to be lamented. But do we suitably lament it? Do not many of us rather seek to console ourselves for his absence, by engaging more eagerly in worldly pursuits? And are those, who have any life, using all the means in their power to revive and animate those who have none? In fine, is there among us any thing like that ardent, unappeasable desire for the presence of Christ; that preference of it to every other blessing, which we have reason to think the disciples felt? I fear not; and I cannot but suspect, that, if he does not, on this occasion, favor us with his presence, it will be, not on account of our unworthiness, nor on account of our unpreparedness in other respects; but because he sees that we are not suitably desirous of his presence, and that we are not exciting ourselves and each other to seek for it. If we are really deficient in this respect, it is indeed a great obstacle to the coming of Christ among us; for seldom indeed does he visit any church, until he sees that his presence is earnestly desired and sought for, and that he shall meet with a joyful reception. My brethren, should he not favor us with his presence on this occasion, let us consider this evil as the cause of his absence, and set ourselves to remove it without delay. Let all,

who have any religious feeling, use all the means in their power to excite similar feelings in the hearts of their brethren. Let all beware, how they forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is. Remember that it was a private meeting of the church, at which our Saviour thus appeared to them. Remember, too, what Thomas lost by being absent from this one meeting. While all his fellow disciples were filled with faith, and hope, and love, and joy, he was left for a time under the power of unbelief and despondency.

But should our Master, notwithstanding our unworthiness, condescend to favor us at this time with his gracious presence; should he come and stand in the midst of us, and say, Peace be unto you; what shall we do? My brethren, we need not tell you what to do. Your own hearts will inform you. Every one, to whom the Saviour shall manifest himself, will feel ready to cast himself at his feet, to admire, and wonder at, and thank him for his goodness; he will feel more than ever sensible of his own unworthiness of such a favor; he will repent in dust and ashes, and his future life, like that of the disciples, will evince his sincerity, and be spent in self-denying, and persevering labors in his Master's service.

SERMON XXII.

A FESTIVAL KEPT TO THE LORD.

LEVITICUS XXIII. 39.

WHEN YE HAVE GATHERED IN THE FRUIT OF THE LAND, YE SHALL KEEP A FEAST UNTO THE LORD.

If we review attentively the religious ordinances which God has appointed, we can scarcely fail to perceive, that he has usually passed by all the inventions of men, and adopted institutions which were exclusively his own; institutions, which human wisdom would never have devised, and which, in her view, are too often little better than foolishness. In this, as in many other cases, his ways have not been like our ways, nor his thoughts like our thoughts. These remarks we may see verified, in the appointment of circumcision, of sacrifices, of baptism, and of the Lord's supper. In some few instances, however, God has condescended to pursue a different course. He has selected some significant action, or ceremony, by which men had been previously accustomed to express strong emotion; and, by commanding them to make use of it, as an expression of religious feeling, has invested it with the dignity and sacredness of a religious ordinance. An instance of this kind may be found in the appointment of religious fasting. Fasting is a natural expression, because it is a natural effect, of extreme sorrow; for this

emotion, when felt in a very high degree, takes away the appetite for food, and renders the reception of it not only disagreeable, but almost impracticable. Hence, God prescribed religious fasting as a proper expression of Godly sorrow for sin; and were we affected by our sins as we ought to be, we should feel constrained to fast much more frequently, and should fast much more acceptably, than we do. Another instance of the same kind may be found in the institution of religious feasts, or, to use a more proper term, festivals. From the earliest ages, of which any records remain, mankind have been accustomed to commemorate joyful events, and to express the joy and gratitude which such events excited, by the observance of anniversary festivals. As the all wise God well knew how difficult it would be to wean men from the observance of such festivals, and as they were capable of being rendered subservient to his own gracious designs, he saw fit under the ancient dispensation to give them a religious character, by directing his people to observe them in commemoration of the favors, which they had received from his hand, and as an expression of their gratitude for those favors. Of these divinely appointed festivals, several are mentioned in the Levitical law, but our only concern at present is with that, which is prescribed in our text; When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord.

We do not lead your attention to this command because we suppose it is still in force. It was a part not of the moral, but of the ceremonial law, which was designed to continue only till the coming of Christ, and it has long since been annulled, with the other precepts of that law, by the same authority which imposed it. There can scarcely be a doubt, however, that it was this command which led the fathers of New England to establish the custom of annually observing, at the close of harvest, a day of thanksgiving and praise. But though they established this custom without any express command or warrant from God, the propriety of continuing it cannot well be questioned. To offer praise and thanksgiving to God, is a duty which we find frequently enjoined, not in the Old Testament only, but in the New. It is highly desirable that whole communities should sometimes unite in the performance of this duty; and no season seems so proper for this purpose, as that, which succeeds the gathering in of the fruits of the earth, the gifts of our heavenly Benefactor. In support of this custom we may remark farther, that besides the festivals which God had established, the Jews were accustomed to observe several festivals of human appointment, such as the feast of dedication, and the feast of Purim; and that our Saviour while on earth, sanctioned this custom by uniting with them in the observance of these festivals. We cannot doubt, therefore, that, were he now residing among us, he would unite with us in observ-

ing this day, though it is a festival of human appointment.

But whatever opinions any may entertain with respect to the propriety of observing this day, we presume all will agree, that, if it be observed at all, it ought to be observed in a proper manner; a manner, which we have reason to believe will be acceptable to God. If it is not observed in such a manner, the day will be much worse than lost. It will serve no other purpose than to increase our guilt, excite God's displeasure, and provoke him to express it by sending judgments upon us. He will regard it as he regarded the festivals of the Jews when they ceased to observe them in the manner which he had prescribed; and will, in effect, say to us, as he did to them, Your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. What then, we may and ought to inquire, what is it to observe this day in a right and acceptable manner? The best answer, which I can give to this question, is furnished by our text. It is to keep or observe it, *as a festival unto the Lord.* The necessity of thus observing it may be inferred from the answer, which God gave his ancient people, when they inquired whether they should continue to fast on certain days which had long been set apart for that purpose. When ye fasted, says he, did ye fast at all unto me, even unto me? And when ye ate and drank, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? As if he had had said, Whether you have fasted, or

feasted, ye have done it not unto me, but to please yourselves. Why then do you inquire of me whether you shall continue to observe days for these purposes? So long as you observe them for yourselves, and not unto me, what is it to me, whether you do, or do not observe them. It is then most evident, that, if we mean to observe this day in a manner which shall be acceptable to God, we must keep it as a festival unto him. But still the question returns, What is it to keep, or what is implied in keeping a festival unto God? To this question we may reply, in general terms, that, to keep a festival unto God, is to observe it with a view, not to please ourselves, but to please and honor him; to regard it as a day sacred to his special service; and to spend it in contemplating and praising his perfections, recollecting and thanking him for his favors, rejoicing before him in his existence, his character, his government, and his works, and thus giving him the glory which is due to his name. But the question before us demands on this occasion, a more particular and expanded answer; and such an answer we shall attempt to give it, not however altogether in a dry didactic form, nor by a long enumeration of particulars, but by exhibiting two views of the subject, from which we may learn every thing that it is necessary for us to know respecting it. We shall attempt,

I. To give you a view, of the manner, in which

this festival should be observed by us, considered simply as God's intelligent creatures; and

II. Of the manner in which we should observe it, considered as sinful, guilty creatures, to whom his grace and mercy are offered through a Redeemer.

That the first of these proposed views, may be placed before you, in the clearest and most interesting light, let me request you to suppose, that our first parents, instead of falling, as they did, almost immediately, from their holy and happy state, had continued in it, until they were surrounded by a numerous family like themselves, and that, in these circumstances, they had set apart a day to be observed as a festival to their Creator and Benefactor. It is evident, that, if we can conceive of the manner, in which they would have observed such a day, we shall learn in what manner this day ought to be observed by us, considered simply as God's intelligent creatures; for as such, our rule of duty is the same, which was given to them; we are commanded, as they were, to love God with all our hearts, and as they were perfectly holy, they would render perfect obedience to this command, and spend the day in a perfectly holy manner, as we should aim to spend this, and indeed every other day. Let us then, endeavor to conceive of it. Let us suppose the morning of their appointed festival to have just dawned, and before they wake from their peaceful slumbers let us draw near and take a position favorable for

observing their conduct, and becoming acquainted with their views and feelings. No sooner do they wake to a returning consciousness of existence, than a recollection of the Author, Preserver, and Sustainer of that existence, and of their numberless obligations to his goodness, rushes upon, and fully possesses their minds. No sooner do their eyes open, than they are raised to heaven with a look expressive, in the highest degree, of every holy, affectionate emotion. Each one perceives, with clear intuitive certainty, that he is indebted to God for every thing—that God is his life, his happiness, his all. These views fill his heart with adoring gratitude; gratitude, not like ours, a comparatively cold and half selfish emotion, but a gratitude pure, fervent and operative, which carries out the whole soul in a rapturous burst of thankfulness, and renewed self dedication to God. At the same time, his various perfections, displayed in his works, are reflected to their view from every thing around them. Or, as the apostle expresses it, the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen by the things which he has made. The whole creation is to them like one vast mirror, which reflects the glory of God, as an unruffled lake reflects the image of the noon-day sun. Not more instantaneously, not more powerfully, nor with such a cheering, animating influence, does the light of the sun pour itself upon their opening eyes, as the light of God's glory, shining in all his works, pours

itself upon the eye of their mind, illuminating and warming, with its vivid celestial beams, every recess of the soul, and filling that little interior world with unclouded day.

And while all the works of God thus reflect his glories to the eye, they seem to proclaim his praises to the ear, of their mind. To them every object has a voice, and every voice, in language which they well understand, tells them something of the perfections of their Creator. The heavens declare to them his glory, and every leaf, and every flower whispers his praise. In fine, to them every place is full of God, every object speaks of God; every thing shines with the glory of God; and as a recollection of his favors awakened their gratitude, so a view of his glories excites their reverence, their admiration, their love, and joy, and gradually raises their affections to such a height, that it becomes impossible not to express them. Their eyes, their countenances, have indeed already expressed them, and rendered even their silence eloquent, for while they were musing the fire of devotion burned within. But they can be silent no longer, and in strains no less pure, and little less sweet and powerful, than those of the angelic choirs, they begin to pour forth the emotions of their swelling, almost bursting hearts, and with humble, but rapturous thanksgivings and praises, acknowledge the favors and celebrate the perfections of their adorable Creator. And while they thus address to him their thanks, and their

praises, they feel that they are addressing not an absent, but a present God.. Though invisible to their bodily eyes, he is not so to the eye of their minds; they perceive, they feel his presence; they feel that his all pervading, all enfolding Spirit pervades and embraces their souls, breathing into them love, and joy, and peace, unutterable, and wrapping them up, as it were, in himself. Thus each individual apart, commences the observance of their festal day, and enjoys intimate, and sweet, and ennobling communion with the Father of spirits in solitary devotion.

But man is a social being, and the social principle, which God has implanted in his nature, prompts him to wish for associates in his religious pleasures and pursuits. It is proper that he should wish for them, and, if possible, obtain them; for when a festival is to be kept unto the Lord, when thanksgiving and praise are to be offered, two are better than one. United flames rise higher towards heaven, impart more heat, and shine with brighter lustre, than while they remained separated. If private, solitary devotion be the melody of religion, united devotions constitute its harmony; and without harmony the music is not perfect and complete. What, comparatively, would the songs of heaven be, were they sung by a single voice, even though it were the voice of an archangel? Let us then now contemplate the scattered members of this holy and happy community assembling from their solitary walks, and places of retirement,

to rejoice, and praise, and give thanks together, and thus unite the flames and the incense of individual devotion in the blaze of one grand, combined sacrifice. Mark the feelings, with which they approach and meet. Every eye sparkles with delight; every countenance beams with affection; there is but one heart, and one soul among them all, and that heart, and that soul is filled with holy gratitude and love, tempered by adoring admiration, reverence, and awe. Fresh excitements to the increase of these emotions are furnished by their meeting. Each one sees in his rational, immortal fellow creatures, a nobler work of God, a brighter exhibition of his moral perfections, than the whole inanimate creation could afford. In each of them he sees that image of God, which consists in knowledge, and righteousness, and holiness; for in this image man was created, and we are supposing him not as yet to have lost it. And while each one contemplates this image of God in his fellow creatures, he is ready to exclaim, If these miniature images of God are so lovely, how infinitely worthy of love must the great original be? If there is so much to admire in the streams, what admiration does the fountain deserve? Nor is this all. In the various relations and ties, which bind them together, they see new proofs of all-wise benevolence, new reasons why they should love and thank him, who established these relations, and formed these ties. The husband and the wife meet with that perfect mutual affection, which God

enjoins, and a recollection of the happiness which has resulted from their union, leads them, with simultaneous emotion, to bless the Being, who gave them to each other. Parents and children meet in the perfect exercise of holy, parental, and filial affection; and while the parents see in their children the gifts of God, and the children see in their parents those whom he appointed to be the protectors of their infancy, the instructers of their childhood, and the guide of their youth, they unite to bless him together. Thus, instead of idolizing children and friends, or putting them in the place of God, they love and enjoy God in them, and make use of them to excite their gratitude, and lead their affections to him. Under the influence of these affections, the yet stammering child is taught the name of its Creator and Benefactor; while to the attentive ear of those who are a little farther advanced in life, the history of the creation and of all that God has done for his creatures, is recounted; his commands, and their obligations to obey them, are stated; the nature and design of the festival, which they are observing, are explained; and they are taught to perform their humble part in its appropriate services. In these services all now join; and O, with what perfect union of heart! with what self annihilating humility,—with what seraphic purity and fervency of affection,—do they present their combined offering of thanksgiving and praise! Suffice it to say, that the ear of omniscience itself can discern no shade of difference

between the language of their lips and that of their hearts, unless it be this, that their hearts feel more than their lips can express.

These sacred and delightful services being ended, they prepare to feast before their Benefactor; but this preparation is made, and the feast itself is participated with the same feelings, which animated their devotions; for whether they eat, or drink, or whatever they do, they do all to the glory of God. On such an occasion they may, perhaps, place upon their board a greater variety, than usual, of the fruits of Paradise; but if so, it is not so much with a view to gratify their appetites, as to exhibit more fully the various and ample provision which God has made for them; and thus, through the medium of their senses, to affect their hearts; for man has not yet begun to consume the bounty of heaven upon his lusts. He has not yet yielded himself a willing, but ignoble slave to his corporeal appetites; nor, we may add, has he yet learned, as too many of his posterity have since done, to sit down to the table of Providence, and rise from it refreshed, without acknowledging the hand that feeds him. No, the blessing of God is implored and his presence desired, as the crowning joy of their feast, without which even the fruits of Paradise would be insipid, and the society of Paradise uninteresting. And while they sit around his table, the viands which nourish their bodies, furnish their minds with new food for devotional feeling; for in every fruit before them they see the power,

wisdom, and goodness of their Benefactor, embodied and made perceptible to their senses; they see that his goodness prompted him to give them that gratification, that his wisdom devised it and that his power gave it existence. Thus, while they feast upon the fruits of his bounty, their souls feast upon the perfections which those fruits display. Thus God is seen and enjoyed in every thing, and every thing leads up their thoughts and affections to him, while he sits unseen in the midst of them, shedding abroad his love through all their hearts, and rejoicing with benevolent delight in the happiness which he at once imparts and witnesses. Meanwhile, their conversation is such, as the attending angels, who hover around, would not be ashamed to utter, nay such as God himself is well pleased to hear. The law of kindness is on all their lips, for the law of love is in all their hearts.

But we can pursue this part of our subject no farther. This must suffice as a specimen of the manner, in which sinless creatures would keep a feast unto the Lord, indeed, of the manner in which all their days would be spent. And if so, may we not well exclaim, O sin, what hast thou done! What beauty, what glory, what happiness hast thou destroyed! How hast thou embittered our food, poisoned our cup, darkened the eye which once saw God in all his works; polluted and rendered insensible the heart, which once bore his image and was filled with his love, and by one fatal accursed blow, murdered both the body and the soul of man!

Who can wonder that God hates—who can refrain from hating—the destroyer of so much good, the cause of so much evil! Were it not for sin, we should observe this day in a manner as holy and as happy, as has now been described. We have the same powers and faculties, which were possessed by our first parents in Paradise. And if we may believe the declarations of scripture, or the testimony of good men, God's glory still shines as brightly in his works, as it did then. There is nothing but our own sinfulness to prevent us from seeing it as clearly, as it was seen by our first parents, and from being affected by the sight as they were affected.

But to return—If such is the manner, in which innocent creatures would keep a feast unto the Lord, then such is the manner in which we should aim to keep this annual festival. We should desire and aim to exercise the same feelings, to worship God with the same sincerity, fervency, and unity of affection, and to converse and partake of his bounty in the same manner. I do not say we shall perfectly succeed in such an attempt, but I do say that we ought to make it. He who does not make it, he who does not desire and aim to serve God with his whole heart, and feel dissatisfied with himself in proportion as he comes short of it, is as far from Christian sincerity, as he is from sinless perfection.

But though we all ought to be perfectly holy, it is but too evident that we are not so. We have all sinned; we still sin; we must all have perished in

our sins, had not God graciously interposed to prevent it. He has revealed a new dispensation, a dispensation, in which grace and mercy are offered us through a Redeemer.

Through this Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, he has also revealed to us, a new way of approaching him, of serving him acceptably, and of obtaining everlasting life. These all important facts and truths connected with them, must by no means be forgotten or neglected by us, when keeping a feast unto the Lord. They must evidently modify, in a very great degree, the manner in which we observe it, and the views and feelings with which its services are performed. This remark we shall illustrate more fully. Having shewn how we ought to keep this festival, considered simply as God's intelligent creatures, we shall now, as was proposed,

II. Attempt to show how we should keep it, considered as sinful creatures, under a dispensation of mercy.

In attempting this we shall pursue the same course, which has been pursued in the former part of the discourse. We will suppose that the holy and happy community, whose festival we have been contemplating, fall from their original state, and become sinners like ourselves. In other words, they transgress the law of God, the sanction of which is death. In consequence, sentence of death is immediately passed upon them, to be executed, they know not when, but just when it shall please their offended judge. Meanwhile, they

are banished from Paradise, excluded from the favor and presence of God, and from the tree of life, which was the sacramental pledge of their immortality, and see a flaming sword blazing behind them, and turning every way, to prevent them from again entering their forfeited Eden. Nor is the change in their outward situation greater than that, which they find in their character and feelings. They have lost the image of God, they have lost all love to God, they no longer regard or address him with filial affection as a Father and a friend, but view him, so far as they view him at all, as an offended sovereign, whose law they have transgressed, and by whose law they are inexorably doomed to destruction. Indeed, God seems almost to have disappeared from their view. Their intellectual eye, darkened by sin, no longer sees his glory in all his works; he no longer seems to sit enthroned on the universe which he had made, nor do they, in the daily gifts of Providence, see proofs of his bounty or incitements to gratitude. The immense void which his disappearance has left in the heart, is filled by self love, and an inordinate, idolatrous attachment to creatures; and to the great idol self, and other subordinate idols, is transferred that homage, and those affections, which were once rendered to God alone. In fine, they are become spiritually dead, dead to God, to goodness, and to the end for which they were created, dead in trespasses and sins. Still, however, conscience retains a place in their breasts, and at times it will speak; but it

speaks nothing except reproach, condemnation, and terror. The only words, which it has heard from the mouth of God, are, Thou shalt surely die; and these therefore are the only words which it will repeat. And when roused by these words, they look forward, it is without hope of mercy, it is to death and the blackness of darkness, to judgment, and fiery indignation. Then they wish in vain, that they had never existed, they curse, at once, their existence and its author, and feel all those terrible, unaccountable emotions, which agitate with more than a tempest's fury, a heart at enmity with God, whenever it is forced to contemplate its great enemy.

Now suppose that these creatures, in this sinful, guilty, wretched, despairing state, are placed under a dispensation, in which the grace and mercy of God are offered them through a Redeemer, and that just such a revelation is made to them, as has been made to us in the New Testament. Suppose farther, that, after they are placed under the new dispensation, they resolve to observe a religious festival. What would be necessary, what would be implied in their keeping it as a feast unto the Lord? I answer, the first thing necessary would evidently be a cordial reconciliation to God. Until such a reconciliation took place, they could neither observe a religious festival, nor perform any other religious duty, in a right and acceptable manner.—Indeed, they would have no disposition to do it, nor any of the feelings, which it implies and demands.

The feelings, proper to be exercised on a religious festival, are holy love, joy, and gratitude. But they could exercise no love to God, unless they were previously reconciled to him, to his character, his government, and law. Nor could they exercise holy joy; for how could they rejoice in the existence, or in the perfections, or in the government of a being, whom they did not love? Nor could they sincerely offer thanksgiving and praise; for who can sincerely praise a being, or offer thanks to a being, whose character and conduct he dislikes? Can a self-justifying criminal, under sentence of death, rejoice and feast with proper feelings before the judge who has condemned him; or a servant, under the eye of a master, whom he regards with mingled dread and aversion; or a rebel, in the presence of a sovereign, whose character and laws he dislikes, and whose power he dreads? Or could the prodigal son, had he been taken by force and placed at his father's table, while under the full influence of those feelings which led him to forsake his father's house, have enjoyed that situation, or relished the feast before him? But let the criminal be reconciled to his judge and receive pardon; let the servant love his master, and the rebel submit to his sovereign; let the prodigal come to himself, and exercise right feelings towards his father, and the difficulty would, in each case, be removed, and love, and joy, and gratitude be felt. Cordial reconciliation to God, then, is indispensably necessary

to enable sinful creatures to keep a feast unto the Lord.

But reconciliation to God necessarily involves hatred of sin, and self-condemnation, sorrow and shame on account of it. No sinner can feel cordially reconciled to God, until he sees that his character and all his proceedings are perfectly holy, and just, and good; for if they are not so, we ought not to be reconciled to them. But among God's proceedings, is the sentence of condemnation, which he has pronounced upon every sinner. This, therefore, the sinner must see and feel to be right, or he will not be reconciled to it. Now if a sinner sees it to be right, that God should condemn him, he will, of course, condemn himself. He will say, God has been right, and I have been wrong; and in view of the wrong which he has done, he will feel remorse, sorrow and shame, or, in one word, he will repent. Without unfeigned repentance, then, no sinner can keep a feast to the Lord; for every one, who is impenitent, is most certainly unreconciled to God. He justifies himself and thus condems the Almighty.

The exercise of faith in the Redeemer, through whom grace and mercy are offered, is also indispensably necessary to the right observance of a feast unto the Lord. The sinner, who has just views of God, and of himself, as in some degree every penitent sinner has, is unable to see how his own salvation can be reconciled with the holiness, justice, and truth of God. He feels himself to be a

sinner; he hears God's law say, The soul that sinneth shall die; and he sees that God's holiness, justice, and truth, all demand the execution of this sentence. How then dare he hope for salvation? And unless he dare hope for it, how can he keep a feast unto the Lord? How can he pour out from a happy, grateful, exulting heart, accents of thanksgiving and praise? He will rather wish to fast, to weep, and lament, and scarcely will he dare ask his offended God to pardon and save him, lest it should be asking him to sacrifice his perfections for the sake of a sinful worm of the dust. But shew him the Redeemer, set before him his atonement and intercession, and let him exercise faith in them, and all his difficulties, doubts and fears are removed; he sees that God can be just, and yet justify and save every sinner, who believes in Jesus; and now he can hope, and rejoice, and exult; now he feels, indeed, prepared to keep a feast unto the Lord; now he can cry, O Lord, I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Now he can feel and obey the exhortation, Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, for God now accepteth thy works.

But these are not the only reasons, why the exercise of faith in the Redeemer is necessary, in the case of sinful creatures, to the acceptable observance of a religious festival. When God prescribes a way, in which sinners shall approach him, and present their services, they must on all occasions

approach him in that way, and in no other; or, instead of finding acceptance, they will only excite his displeasure. All the Jewish sacrifices, for instance, were to be offered, all their religious services performed, and all their festivals observed, with reference to the tabernacle or temple, where God manifested his gracious presence, and through the medium of those typical mediators, or priests, whom he had appointed. If any Jew presumed to disregard these injunctions, to worship God on a high place of his own creating, or to offer his sacrifice with his own hands, instead of applying to the priests, he drew upon himself a curse, instead of a blessing. Just so under the christian dispensation. Christ is at once the true tabernacle, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and the only Mediator between God and man,—the only way by which sinful man can have access to God. I, says he, am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me. And again,—through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Hence an apostle exhorts us, whatever we do, in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. This being the case, we can neither keep a feast unto the Lord, nor offer thanks, nor perform any other religious duty acceptably, except in the name of Christ, or in the exercise of faith in his mediation.

And now let us suppose the community, which we have already twice contemplated, first as per-

fectly holy, and then as sinful, guilty, and undone, to be a third time placed before us, reconciled to God, exercising repentance and faith in Christ, and engaged in keeping a religious festival, like that, which we this day observe. They still feel, though in an imperfect degree, the same affection which we saw them exercise toward God in their original state; but these affections are in a considerable degree, at least, excited by different objects, and variously modified by the change which has taken place in their situation. They still feel grateful to God for their existence, for their faculties, and for the various temporal blessings which surround them; but they now view all these things as blessings, which they had forfeited and lost, and which had been re-purchased for them by their Redeemer, and freely bestowed upon them, as the gifts of his dying love. Hence they seem, as it were, to see his name on every blessing, and every blessing reminds them of him. They still, as formerly, see and admire God's perfections, as displayed in the works of creation; but their admiration and their praises are now principally excited by the far brighter, the eclipsing display which he has made of his moral perfections, in the cross of Christ, in the wonders of redemption. If they still adore, and praise, and thank him, as the God of nature, they adore, and praise, and thank him, with incomparably more fervency, as the God of grace, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If they think of him with affection, as the God who made

the world, they think of him with far warmer affection, as the God who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotton Son to die for its redemption. Loud above all their other praises and thanksgivings may be heard the cry, Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! Thanks be unto God and the Lamb for redeeming love! This accords with God's own prediction, that under the New dispensation, his former works should be comparatively forgotten, and come no more into mind. And while their thanksgivings and praises are thus principally called forth by the blessings which are conferred, and the divine perfections which are displayed, in the work of redemption, Jesus Christ holds that prominent place in their affections, and in all their solitary and united devotions, which he evidently held in the affections and devotions of the apostles, and to which their writings teach us he is entitled. If they come to God, it is as dwelling in Christ; if they see his glory, it is as shining in the face of Christ; if they rejoice in God, it is as manifesting himself in Christ; if they trust in God, it is through the merits of Christ; if they pray to God, it is in reliance on Christ; if they enjoy God, they enjoy him in Christ; if they offer praise and thanksgiving to God, it is in the name of Christ; if they are constrained to holy obedience, it is the love of Christ which constrains them; if they hope to persevere and obtain the victory, it is in dependence on Christ; if they say, we live, they add, yet not we, but Christ liveth in us; and when

they anticipate most confidently the happiness of heaven, they rejoice to borrow its language, and cry, Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever. In fine, Christ is their wisdom, their strength, their righteousness, their life, and they cordially unite with an apostle in saying, Christ is all in all. Without him, we can do nothing; but through him we can do all things. And while their religious views, and feelings, and services, are all thus modified by an habitual reference to Christ, they are still farther modified by a similar recollection of the sinful, guilty, wretched state, from which he rescued them, and by a view of the sins, which still cleave to them, and defile all their duties.— The effects of these views and recollections, are penitence, contrition, and deep humiliation of soul, and by them, all their religious feelings are pervaded and characterised. When they love their God and Redeemer, it is with a penitent love; when they rejoice in him, it is with a penitent joy; when they believe in him, it is with a penitent faith; when they obey him, it is with a penitent obedience; when they offer him thanksgivings and praises, penitence mingles with them her humble confessions, and contrite sighs; and the place on earth, which they most covet, in which they most delight, is that of the woman who stood weeping at the feet of Christ, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Even while observing a joyful festival, tears, the fountain of which

is supplied by godly sorrow for sin, and gratitude to the Redeemer; tears, which it is delightful to shed, are seen on the same countenances, which glow with love and hope, and beam with holy, humble joy in God.

And when they sit down to the table of Providence, to feast upon his bounty, the exercise of these emotions is not suspended. They feel there as pardoned sinners ought to feel, and as they would wish to feel at the table of Christ, for the table of Providence is become to them his table; they remember him there; they remember, that when even their daily food was forfeited by sin, and the curse of heaven rested upon their basket and store, he redeemed the forfeiture, and turned the curse into a blessing. Hence they feast upon his bounty with feelings resembling those, which we may suppose to have filled the bosoms of Joseph's brethren, when they ate and rejoiced before him. They had, you recollect, hated him, persecuted him, conspired his death, and sold him for a slave. But by the providence of God he was exalted to power, and had the satisfaction, not only of seeing them humbled at his feet, but of saving them and their families from death. After he had made himself known to them, assured them of his forgiveness, and shewed them, that, though they meant evil against him, God had overruled it for good, he invited them to a feast, and richly loaded their table with provisions from his own. We may, in some measure, conceive what their feelings must have been on

such an occasion. Though they feasted and rejoiced before their highly exalted, but generous, forgiving, and affectionate brother, yet feelings of sorrow and shame could not but mingle with their joy, and they must often have felt as if they wished to rise from their table, throw themselves at his feet, and once more ask his forgiveness. Well then may the redeemed sinner feel thus, while he feasts and rejoices before that much injured, exalted, and compassionate Saviour, who is not ashamed to call him brother, and who has not only redeemed and forgiven him, but called him to share in all his possessions and glories. And while such emotions toward the Saviour fill the heart, his name cannot be absent from the tongue. Husbands and wives will speak of him to each other; parents will speak of him to their children; his person, his character, his offices and his works, will furnish the subject of their conversation, and instructions; and a realizing apprehension of his unseen presence, far from damping their joy, will only chastise and purify and exalt it.

Such then, my hearers, are the views and feelings, with which, considered as sinful creatures, under the christian dispensation, we ought to observe this sacred festival. And now, allow me to ask, is this requiring any thing unreasonable? Is it requiring one emotion for which the Gospel of Christ does not furnish ample cause? Is it requiring any thing more than may be justly expected from creatures situated as we are, enjoying such

distinguishing blessings, and privileges, and indebted for them all to a Saviour's dying love? Indeed, is it requiring any thing, which would not be, in the highest degree, conducive to your own happiness? Would not this day, if spent in such a manner, be the happiest day which you ever enjoyed; a day like one of the days of heaven, and affording a rich foretaste of its happiness? Why then should we not all spend what remains of it in this manner? why not thus keep it as a feast to the Lord? Ah, my hearers, this question cannot be answered, at least not in a manner which will be satisfactory to God, nor even to an enlightened conscience. And why should any seek for an answer? Why should any one seek an excuse for deferring his own happiness? Suppose two persons, who have long been at variance, should happen to meet to day at one of your tables. Might they not become immediately reconciled, if they chose, and feast together in mutual love; and would not the happiness of the feast be heightened to each of them, by the pleasure of reconciliation? Why then may you not all become immediately reconciled to your God, and begin to love that Saviour who says, I love them that love me? Why may you not all repair to your respective habitations, and there feast before God with feelings resembling these? How can you find it in your hearts to leave his house, where he entreats you to be reconciled, return to the habitation which he has prepared for you, feast upon the provision

which he has made for you, which a Saviour purchased for you with his blood, look upon the children and friends whom he has given you, consider the ties with which he has bound them to you, and yet refuse to love him, and still persist in employing the powers and faculties, with which he has entrusted you, in opposing him! O do not, I entreat you, be so ungrateful to him, so cruel to yourselves. As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

SERMON XXIII.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

REVELATION I. 7.

BEHOLD, HE COMETH WITH CLOUDS; AND EVERY EYE SHALL SEE HIM, AND THEY ALSO WHICH PIERCED HIM: AND ALL KINDREDS OF THE EARTH SHALL WAIL BECAUSE OF HIM: EVEN SO. AMEN.

AN apostle, speaking of the Lord's supper, intimates that the church will continue to partake of it, and, by partaking of it, to shew forth his death until he shall come again. This ordinance, then, may be considered as a chain, which connects the first and the second coming of Christ. Of this chain, as of the gospel, he is at once the beginning and the end. If we look back to the time of its institution, we see Christ at his table, surrounded by a little and despised band of disciples. If we look forward to the period of its completion, we see him on the judgment-seat, surrounded by all the glories and hosts of the celestial world. If we look at its commencement, we see him expiring on the cross; if we look at its termination, we see him coming in the clouds of heaven. It is this coming, of which the beloved disciple speaks in our text. Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: even so. Amen.

In this passage there are three things which de-

serve our attention ;—the *coming* of Christ ; his being *seen by all*, and the *manner in which different characters will be affected by the sight.* A few remarks on each of these particulars will comprise the present discourse.

I. Let me lead your attention to the coming of Christ itself. Behold he cometh with clouds. Of the greatness, the importance of this event I shall say nothing. To endeavor to enlarge your conceptions of it, by surrounding it with the pomp of language, would be like attempting to gild the noon-day sun. Every one must perceive at once, that, if we except the first coming of Christ to die for the world, inspiration has revealed no fact more momentous, and interesting than that of his second coming to judge the world. But respecting the certainty of this event, it may be proper to say something more. I need not inform you, that, for evidence of its certainty we must look to the scriptures alone : for it is a fact, which lies far beyond the ken of human reason ; a fact, which God alone could reveal. Reason might however, perhaps, venture to expect, that, if God thought proper to reveal a fact of such momentous interest, he would reveal it clearly, and with a frequency of repetition proportionate to its importance. In this expectation she would not be disappointed. There is perhaps no event, yet future, which is revealed so clearly, or in so many different passages as this. And in revealing it, the Spirit of God seems to have avoided with unusual care, all metaphorical and

figurative expressions, and to have chosen only the plainest and most simple language; language, which cannot be misunderstood, nor, without the utmost violence, perverted. A few out of the many passages in which it is thus revealed, you will permit me to mention. Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. Such is the language of inspired men. Equally explicit is the testimony of angels. This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Still more explicit, if possible is the language of our Saviour himself. The Son of man, says he, shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations. And again, Ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. I shall mention but one declaration more, a declaration uttered in circum-

stances of peculiar solemnity. After he had been apprehended by the Jews, the High Priest, finding that he made no reply to their false accusations, said to him, I adjure thee, by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. This, according to the customs of the Jews, was equivalent to the administration of an oath. And our Saviour's answer was equivalent to an answer given upon oath. And what was that answer? I am: and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. On hearing this testimony from his lips, we may reply with the high Priest, though in a different sense, what need have we of any further witness? we have heard from his own mouth. If the solemn declaration, the oath of the Son of God is true, then it is certain, that he will come a second time in the clouds of heaven. He, who does not believe this, believes nothing which the scriptures assert.

II. The next particular in our text, which claims attention, is the fact, that Jesus Christ, at his second coming, shall be seen by all mankind. Every eye shall see him. This assertion teaches us, that he will come in a visible form; for though the word see, when used alone, often signifies merely to perceive, yet it never, so far as I recollect, has this signification when used, as it is here, in connection with the eye. The mind may be said, figuratively speaking, to see or perceive truth, and many other things, which are in their very

nature invisible; but the eye can see nothing, which is not visible. And as Jesus Christ will come in a visible form, so he will come, doubtless, in a human form. He will come arrayed with that glorious body, which, as another inspired passage informs us, he now wears in heaven. Should this appear doubtful to any, we would refer them to the passages already mentioned, in which our Saviour says, Ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; an expression which must mean, if it mean any thing, that he will come in his human nature. The declaration of the angels is of the same import. Ye shall see this same Jesus come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. But they saw him ascend to heaven in a human form; they will, therefore, see him coming in a human form. The language of St. Paul is, if possible, still more decisive. God, says he, hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given assurance to all men, by raising him from the dead. At the same time we are assured, in other places, that God is Judge himself, that our God shall come and not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. And St. John, describing a view which he had in vision of the proceedings of the judgment day, says, I saw the dead small and great stand before God. These otherwise contradictory passages will appear perfectly reconcilable, if we recollect, that

Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, God and man united in one person. His glorified body will be the temple, the vehicle, in which God will come to judgment, and this vehicle will be visible. Of its appearance we may, perhaps, form some idea from the description given by Daniel and St. John. I beheld, says the former, till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow ;—his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. Similar are the expressions of St. John. I saw one, says he, like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; and his feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice was as the sound of many waters, and his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength. I need not remind you, that similar was his appearance on the mount of transfiguration, when his human form assumed, for a time, some of that glory, which it was destined to wear after his exaltation to heaven; a glory, however, which will be, doubtless, increased in a degree that is inconceivable, when he shall come, not in his own glory only, but in that of his Father. Of this glory the sublime language of St. John is suited to give the most exalted conception.

I saw, says he, a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face heaven and earth fled away. But the assertion in our text teaches us, not only, that Jesus Christ will come in a visible form, but that all mankind shall behold him in this form. Every eye shall see him. The same truth is taught elsewhere. He assured his disciples, that they should see him. He assured his enemies, that they should see him. He declared, that, when he comes, he will gather before him all nations. And an apostle says, we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. And if he comes in a visible form, and all are assembled before him, all must, of course, see him. My hearers, meditate, a moment, upon this interesting truth. Let every one say to himself, *I* shall see this great sight. *I* shall see the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Saviour, the Judge, of whom I have heard so much. *My* body, when slumbering in the grave, will hear his omnipotent voice and come forth. *My* long closed eyes will open, and the descending Judge, and the judgment-seat, with all its splendors, will burst upon them. Such was Job's expectation. Though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom mine eyes shall behold, and I shall see for myself, and not another. Let us attend,

III. To the manner, in which different characters will be affected by this sight. Were the scriptures silent respecting this part of our subject, we might still be sure, that all will not contemplate

this spectacle with similar feelings, nor be affected by it in the same manner. The feelings, with which men regard any object, will ever correspond with their own character. Different characters will regard the same object with different feelings; opposite characters with opposite feelings. Now we know, that, among mankind, there are characters not only widely different, but diametrically opposite. We know, that, even now, these opposite characters regard Jesus Christ, his word, his institutions, his friends, with opposite feelings. We know, that the thoughts of his second coming affect different persons in a very different manner. Some desire it, others dread it; some think of it with pleasure, others with pain. Hence we might naturally conclude, that, when the event shall arrive, different characters will be differently affected by it. But we are not left to our own inferences and reasonings on this point. Our text plainly intimates, and other passages clearly teach us, that the sight of Christ's coming in the clouds of heaven will produce widely different effects upon different characters. They teach us, first, that all good men desire this event, and will contemplate it with the most joyful emotions. This is intimated in our text, where the inspired writer, after predicting Christ's coming, and his being seen by every eye, adds, Even so: amen,—that is, so let it be; let the event take place, as soon as God pleases. In thus expressing his own feelings, he expressed the

feelings of all, who, like himself, are faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Agreeably, Christians are described as those, who look for him; that is, who expect and desire his second coming. And St. Paul informs us, that the righteous Judge will, at the last day, give a crown of righteousness to all who *love* his appearing. In another passage, after predicting the second coming of Christ, he adds, wherefore beloved, comfort ye one another with these words. Now if good men expect and desire Christ's coming, if they love to think of it, if it comforts them to speak of it, then surely they will rejoice when they see it. Indeed, they cannot but rejoice to see him, whom they have followed by faith, whom they have loved with supreme affection; who comes to complete their salvation, to give them a crown of righteousness. Nor will this joy be checked by any guilty fears or anxieties; for in their Judge they will see their Saviour, their Friend, their Head, whose love for them passeth knowledge, and who has said, whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and the holy angels. But,

2. While all the faithful servants of Christ will contemplate him with joy unspeakable and full of glory, all of a different character will witness his coming with unutterable horror, anguish, and despair. All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. These effects of his coming are still more forcibly described in a succeeding chapter. I beheld, says the Apostle, and the kings of the earth,

and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand! It seems to be clearly intimated, both in this passage and in our text, that the sight of Christ, at his second coming, will be terrible to all, or nearly all, who are then found alive in the world. We learn from other inspired passages the reason of this. It is because all, or nearly all, who are then found alive, will be wicked men. When the Son of man cometh, says our Saviour, will he find faith on the earth? That is, will he find many, who believe in him, and expect his coming?—a mode of expression, which forcibly intimates, that he will not. In another passage, he teaches us, that, at his second coming, he will find the world in the same situation, in which it was found by the flood, in the days of Noah, and in which Sodom was in the days of Lot. As it was, says he, in the days of Noah, and of Lot, so shall it be in the day, when the Son of man is revealed, or appears. They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, and knew not, till the day in which Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

From these and other passages it is evident, that, at the second coming of Christ, there will be very

little religion, very few pious men found in the world. But it may be asked, how does this representation agree with the many predictions, which assure us that religion is yet to prevail, in a far greater degree than it ever has done, and that the knowledge of God shall fill the earth, even as the waters cover the sea? We shall find an answer to this question in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. We are there taught, that the great tempter and deceiver of mankind, who deceiveth the whole world, shall be bound for a thousand years; that is, during that period he shall not be permitted to tempt or deceive mankind, and, in consequence, religion will almost universally prevail. To this period, all the passages, which speak of the great extension of Christ's kingdom, refer. But after the expiration of this period, the great adversary will be released for a season; in other words, he will be suffered to renew his temptations, the consequence will be a great and almost universal apostacy. Religion will be ridiculed and opposed, and its friends persecuted with peculiar rancor; the church will be compassed about with enemies, and on the very point of being swallowed up, and then, in that critical moment, will be seen the signs of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. The sight will strike them suddenly and unexpectedly. It will come, as our Saviour informs us, as a flash of lightning; or, as an apostle expresses it, the day of the Lord will so come, as a thief in the night. For when they shall say,

Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them. And who can doubt that such a sight, bursting in such a manner upon men immersed in worldly cares and pleasures, or engaged in opposing the cause of Christ, will throw them into an agony of consternation and distress?

Suppose, for a moment, that this event should take place now; that, while I speak, the trumpet should sound, and the fiery brightness, which will surround the Judge, should begin to shine through these windows. Can you doubt, that many of this congregation would be distracted with guilty fear and remorse; and that all sinners, in all parts of the world, would be affected in a similar manner? Some of you have seen into what wild alarm, what temporary distraction, an assembly may be thrown in a moment by an alarm of fire, or a cry, that the house is falling. What then would be the effects produced by the sight of the final Judge, of the heaven's departing, of the world on fire! Less terrible was the sight of the flood to the guilty inhabitants of the old world; less loud, less agonizing was the cry which they uttered, than that which will burst from the lips of guilty mortals, when every eye sees the Judge coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

It is not, however, to those only, who are found alive in the world, that this sight will prove terrible. All the sinful dead, whose bodies are in the grave, will then be roused; for all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man,

and shall come forth; they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. And O, how different will be the appearance of these two classes! The former, with glorious bodies, resembling that of their Saviour, will shine forth like the sun; the holiness, and the love, and the happiness of heaven, beaming in their countenances and sparkling in their eyes; while the latter, dark and gloomy as night, will express nothing but fear and rage, envy and despair. Then will the prediction be fulfilled which says, Ye shall see a difference made between the righteous and the wicked. Then the whole intelligent universe will see, that, verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Permit me now, my hearers, to improve the view we have taken of this subject, by endeavoring to bring it home to your bosoms, your consciences.

1. Consider the certainty of this event. The passages, which have been quoted in this discourse, will, I doubt not, convince you all, that, if the Bible is true, this event is certain, as certain as if it had already taken place. It is the same in the sight of God, as if it had taken place. He sees it as plainly, as if it were already past; and this fact renders it not only certain, that it will take place, but impossible that it should not take place. So certainly then as the Bible is the word of God, so certainly will *your* eyes see the Lord Jesus Christ coming in the clouds of heaven. Are any of *you*

then prepared to rely on the assumption, that the Bible is a forgery? Remember, that, if you rely upon this, you stake every thing dear upon it, and that, should you be deceived, you lose every thing, lose your souls, lose salvation, and render your perdition sure. My hearers, if there is even a probability, nay, if there is a possibility, that the Bible is true, it is madness to incur this risk. But why do we talk of possibilities, or probabilities? We *know* that the Bible is the word of God. We *know* that the Son of God has already come once, and we *know* that he will come again. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away.

2. Let us improve the subject, by making use of it to obscure the glare of worldly objects, and extinguish the fires, which they are continually kindling within us. Let all, who are dazzled or fascinated by the pomp and splendor of the world, come and contemplate a scene, which stains the pride of all human glory, and throws far back into the deepest shade every thing, which men call great, or splendid, or sublime. What are the pompous triumphs, the gaudy pageants, the long processions, on which men gaze with eager delight, compared with the descent of the Creator, the Judge from heaven, surrounded by all the seraphic hosts, and bearing with him the final sentence, the eternal, unchangeable destiny of every child of Adam? Pause, then, for a moment, and contemplate, with the eye of faith, or, if you have no faith, with the

eye of imagination, this tremendous scene. Look at that point, far away in the ethereal regions, where the gradually lessening form of our Saviour disappeared from the gaze of his disciples, when he ascended to heaven. In that point see an uncommon, but faint and undefined brightness just beginning to appear. It has caught the roving eye of yon careless gazer, and excited his curiosity. He points it out to a second, and a third. A little circle soon collects, and various are the conjectures, which they form respecting it. Similar circles are formed, and similar conjectures made, in a thousand different parts of the world But conjecture is soon to give place to certainty—awful, appalling, overwhelming certainty. While they gaze, the appearance, which had excited their curiosity, rapidly approaches, and still more rapidly brightens. Some begin to suspect what it may prove; but no one dares to give utterance to his suspicions. Meanwhile, the light of the sun begins to fade before a brightness superior to his own. Thousands see their shadows cast in a new direction, and thousands of hitherto careless eyes look up, at once, to discover the cause. Full clearly they see it; and now new hopes and fears begin to agitate their breasts. The afflicted and persecuted servants of Christ begin to hope, that the predicted, long expected day of their deliverance is arrived. The wicked, the careless, the unbelieving, begin to fear, that the Bible is about to prove no idle tale. And now fiery shapes, moving

like streams of lightning, begin to appear indistinctly amidst the bright dazzling cloud, which comes rushing down as on the wings of a whirlwind. At length it reaches its destined place. It pauses; then, suddenly unfolding, discloses at once a great white throne, where sits, starry resplendent, in all the glories of the God-head, the man Christ Jesus. Every eye sees him, every heart knows him. Too well do the wretched, unprepared inhabitants of earth now know what to expect; and one universal shriek of anguish and despair rises to heaven, and is echoed back to earth. But louder, far louder than the universal cry, now sounds the last trumpet; and, far above all, is heard the voice of the Omnipotent, summoning the dead to arise, and come to judgment. New terrors now assail the living. On every side, nay under their very feet, the earth heaves, as in convulsions; graves open, and the dead come forth, while, at the same moment, a change, equivalent to that occasioned by death, is effected by Almighty power on the bodies of the living. Their mortal bodies put on immortality, and are thus prepared to sustain a weight of glory, or of wretchedness, which flesh and blood could not endure. Meanwhile, legions of angels are seen, darting from pole to pole, gathering together the faithful servants of Christ from the four winds of heaven, and bearing them aloft to meet the Lord in the air, where he causes them to be placed at his own right hand, preparatory to the sentence, which is

to award to them everlasting life. Such, my brethren, is the scene, which you will one day witness. And where now are the pomps, the honors, the riches, and pleasures, of this world, which yesterday appeared so dazzling? Has not all their brightness faded, even in your estimation? Ought they not to appear, must they not appear, as less than nothing and vanity to him, who looks for, who firmly believes, that he shall see such a spectacle as this? Can you wonder, that faith in such truths, the faith of the christian, should overcome the world? Christian, if you would gain more and greater victories over the world, than you ever have done, bring this scene often before the eye of your mind, and gaze upon it, till you become blind to all earthly glory. He, who gazes long at the sun, becomes unsusceptible of impression from inferior luminaries; and he, who looks much at the Sun of Righteousness, will be little affected by any alluring object, which the world can exhibit.

3. Shall we all see this great sight? and will it affect us according to our characters? Let us then inquire how it would affect us, should it now appear? You cannot but be sensible, that, if you have lived a careless, irreligious life, if your sins are not pardoned, if you are conscious, that you have not faithfully served Christ, his coming would fill you with guilty apprehension, remorse, and despair. You would, you must feel just as a dishonest or unfaithful servant would feel, when summoned into the presence of a long absent master,

to whom all his unfaithfulness was known. On the contrary, if you are the faithful servants of Christ; if you are looking and longing for his appearing; if you have the testimony of your own consciences, that in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, you have had your conversation in the world; then you could witness his approach with joy, and lift up your heads triumphantly, knowing that your redemption was drawing nigh. O, then, if any of you are not prepared to meet the Judge in peace, let it be your great care to become prepared. If any of you are prepared for this event, live as becometh those who expect it. Remember, that your Master's words are, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

SERMON XXIV.

EQUALITY OF MEN WITH ANGELS.

LUKE XX. 36.

FOR THEY ARE EQUAL UNTO THE ANGELS.

EYE, says an apostle, hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him. With this assertion the language of many other inspired passages well corresponds. They inform us, that the faithful servants of God shall shine as the stars, and as the brightness of the firmament, forever and ever; that they shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father; that, when Christ shall appear, they shall be like him, and that they shall not only live with him, but reign with him, through endless ages. To mention but one passage more—our Saviour informs us, that those, who are counted worthy to inherit the future eternal world, shall be equal to the angels. If we consider what is elsewhere revealed respecting these celestial spirits, and how much is implied in being equal to them, we shall probably be of opinion, that this assertion is as well suited to give us exalted conceptions of the future state of the righteous, as any passage in the inspired volume. Nor is it less suited to give us just views of the worth of the soul, and of the importance of every thing which is connected with its salvation; especially of the importance of the ministerial office,

the design of which is to prepare men for that state. It is however supposed by some expositors, that the word, here rendered equal, rather signifies likeness, and that the import of the passage is, they shall be like the angels. But perhaps this alteration would not, if adopted, materially affect the import of the passage. At least, it will not materially affect the remarks, which I propose to make upon it. In making these remarks, it will be my object to shew,

I. That men are capable of being made equal to the angels; and,

II. That, in the future world, good men will be made equal to them.

1. Men are capable of being made equal to the angels. This is an assertion, which it may, at first view, seem needless to prove. Who, it may be asked, can doubt, that he, who gave angels their existence and all their powers, can, if he pleases, transform men into angels? But no one will ask this question, who duly considers the import of the proposition before us. This proposition relates, not to God's ability, but to man's capacity. There cannot be the smallest doubt, that God is able to transform, not only men, but even insects, into angels. But a man, thus transformed, would, it is obvious, cease to be a man, and become one of a totally distinct order of beings. But the question before us, is, whether men can be made equal to the angels, without ceasing to be men; whether they possess faculties, which, if expanded to the

utmost extent of which their nature is capable, would render them equal to the angels. What we assert is, that men do possess such faculties; and this assertion we shall now attempt to prove.

That man is capable of equalling the angels in the duration of their existence, may be very easily shewn. Originally, he was, like them, immortal. And he would still have possessed immortality, had he not become a sinner; for by sin death entered into the world. But what man once possessed, he must still be capable of possessing. If he was originally immortal, he may again become so.

These remarks relate, it is obvious, to the whole man, considered as composed of body and soul; for the soul, separately considered, has never ceased to be immortal. Like the angels, it is of a nature purely spiritual; and though it may, if God pleases, be annihilated, it cannot, properly speaking, die; for death implies a dissolution of parts; but a spirit has no parts, and is therefore incapable of dissolution.

Equally easy is it to shew, that man is capable of being made equal to the angels in moral excellence. The moral excellence of creatures, whether human or angelic, consists in their conformity to the law of God. In other words, it consists in holiness. Every being, who is perfectly holy, possesses the perfection of moral excellence. But man is capable of being made perfectly holy, as holy as an angel. God requires him to be perfectly holy; and he would require of him nothing of

which his nature is incapable. Originally he was perfectly holy; for God made man upright, in his own image, and this image consisted, as inspiration informs us, in righteousness, and true holiness. Man is then capable of being made equal to the angels in moral excellence.

Man is also capable of being raised to an intellectual equality with the angels, or being made equal to them in wisdom and knowledge. The image of God, in which he was created, included knowledge, as well as righteousness and true holiness. And while he retained this image, while he stood crowned by his Maker's hand with glory and honor, and invested with the dominion of the world, in which he dwelt, he was, as inspiration informs us, but little lower than the angels. The inferiority here intended, must, it is acknowledged, have been an intellectual inferiority; for we have already seen, that, with respect to the duration of his existence, and in moral excellence, man was originally not even a little lower than the angels. But this small intellectual inferiority, on the part of man, may be satisfactorily accounted for, without supposing that his intellectual faculties are essentially inferior to those of angels; or that his mind is incapable of expanding to the full dimensions of angelic intelligence. It may be accounted for by difference of situation, and of advantages for intellectual improvement. Man was placed on the earth, which is God's footstool. But angels were placed in heaven, which is his throne, his palace,

and the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory. They were thus enabled to approach much nearer, than could earth-born man, to the great Father of lights; and their minds were, in consequence, illuminated with far more than a double portion of that divine, all disclosing radiance, which diffuses itself around him. While man was compelled to drink from the streams, they could repair at once to the fountain. Nor must it be forgotten, that man was encumbered with a body, which demanded daily supplies of food; while angels, free from all these encumbrances, and upborne on wings which never tire, were able to maintain an uninterrupted and unceasing flight. Who then will wonder, that man, thus situated, thus encumbered, should be a little lower than the angels in the intellectual scale? But free him, as he will hereafter be freed, from all the weights and fetters, with which a gross material body encumbers his immortal mind; place him, as the good will hereafter be placed, in heaven, fast by the throne of an irradiating God; let him, instead of seeing all things as through a glass darkly, behold his Creator, face to face; and who will undertake to prove, who will venture to assert, that he will remain even a little lower than the angels; that he will not, in wisdom and intelligence, soar to an equal height with them? Such an assertion, if made, must be entirely without support; for we know, we can conceive of no intellectual faculties possessed by angels, which are not possessed by man; we neither

know, nor can conceive of any assignable limits, either to the advancement of the human mind in knowledge, or to the possible expansion of its faculties. So far as we know, or can conceive, it is capable of every thing, of which any created mind can be capable. If the mind of an infant can expand during the lapse of a few years, to the dimensions of a Newton's mind, notwithstanding all the unfavorable circumstances in which it is here placed, why may it not, during an eternal residence in heaven, with the omniscient, all wise God for its teacher, expand so far as to embrace any finite circle whatever? Who can place his finger on any assignable spot, and say, Thus far it can go, and no farther? We seem, then, to have sufficient reason for believing, that man is capable of being raised to an intellectual equality with the angels.

Little, if any, less reason have we to believe, that he is capable of being made equal to them in power. It has been often remarked, that knowledge is power; and observation must convince every one that it is so. Man's advances in knowledge have ever been accompanied by a proportionate increase of power. A knowledge of metals gave him power to subdue the earth. A knowledge of astronomy, and of the properties of the magnet, gave him power to traverse the ocean, and convert it from a separating barrier, into a connecting link between distant parts of the world. Another step in the progress of knowledge gave birth to the balloon, and thus furnished man with

the power to ascend into the air. A multitude of equally well known facts might be mentioned, to shew, that human knowledge, and human power, advance with corresponding and equal pace. But we have already seen, that man is capable of being made equal to the angels in knowledge. It should seem then to follow, that he is capable of being made their equal in power; and that, when he shall know every thing which angels know, he will be able to do every thing which angels can do.

Again, man is capable of being raised to an equality with the angels in glory, honor, and felicity. The glory of a creature must consist principally in the intellectual and moral excellencies, with which he is endued; and we have already seen, that, in these respects, man is capable of being made equal to the angels. The dignity, and honor of any creature, must consist in the station which he is appointed to fill, in the offices which he is employed to sustain, and in the services which he is commissioned to perform. And since man is capable of being made equal to the angels in wisdom, and knowledge, and power, he may be rendered capable of filling any station, which angels ever filled; of performing any service, which angels ever performed; of coming as near the eternal throne, as angels ever came. Hence too, it follows, that every source of happiness, which is open to angels, may be opened to man; that his capacity for receiving and containing may be made equal to theirs, and that his opportunity for enjoying happi-

ness, or, in other words, the duration of his existence, may be, like that of angels, without end.

Having thus attempted to shew that man is capable of being made equal to the angels in immortality, in moral excellence, in intellectual qualities, and in power, honor, glory, and felicity, we proceed to shew,

II. That, in the future world, good men shall be made equal to them in each of these particulars.

The fact, that men are capable of being made equal to the angels, goes far to prove the truth of this proposition; for it is not the manner of the all wise Creator to endow his creatures with capacities, that are never to be filled; or with faculties, that are never to be called into action. And since he has formed man with a capacity of being made equal to the angels, it is, to say the least, highly probable, that the good will hereafter be raised to this equality. This conclusion the scriptures abundantly confirm. That good men will be made equal to the angels in the duration of their existence, is proved by the numerous passages in which eternal life is promised to the righteous. Equally full and satisfactory is the proof, which the scriptures afford, that they shall be made equal to the angels in moral excellence; that the process of sanctification which is already begun in their hearts shall be carried to completeness and perfection. The souls of the righteous, which have already entered into the eternal world, are called the spirits of just men made perfect; and the perfection,

to which they have attained, must include perfection in holiness. We are also assured, that Jesus Christ will finally present his whole church to himself, a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy, and without blemish. Little, if any, less satisfactory are the proofs, with which the scriptures furnish us, that the righteous shall be made equal to angels in wisdom and knowledge. They assure us, that they shall see God as he is; that they shall see him face to face; that they shall see as they are seen, and know even as they are known. Language cannot furnish expressions stronger than these. What more can be said of angel, or archangel, than that he knows, even as he is known?

And if the righteous are to be made equal to angels in wisdom and knowledge, it will follow, from remarks which have already been made, that they must equal them in power. We are informed, that their bodies, though sown in weakness, will be raised in power; and this fact seems to furnish some reason for believing, that the powers of their minds will be proportionably increased. From the appearance of Moses and Elijah on the mount of transfiguration, it seems evident, that they possessed power of various kinds, of which we are destitute. They had power to descend from the mansions of the blessed, and to return, and also, as it should seem, to render themselves visible, or invisible, at their pleasure. Indeed it is certain, that, in some respects at least, the powers of the

righteous must be greatly increased, or they would be unable to sustain that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and honor, and felicity, which is reserved for them in the future world. The scriptures fully warrant the assertion, that, in each of these particulars, they will be made equal, if not superior, to the angels. In the vision of the heavenly world, with which St. John was favored, he saw the representatives of the church placed immediately before the eternal throne, while the angels, placed at a greater distance, formed a circle around them. Should it be contended, that we can infer nothing from a vision, we will waive this passage, and remark, that they inform us, that Christ's faithful servants shall sit and reign with him upon his throne,—an honor, in which it is no where intimated that any of the angels shall share. Indeed, the disciples of Christ are in a peculiar sense his members, and, as such they will largely share in all the honors, and dignities, and glories, of their exalted Head. It is, doubtless, in virtue of this free, intimate, and peculiar relation to him, that they will, as an apostle assures us, judge the world, and even judge angels. Speaking of the righteous as vessels of mercy, whom God is preparing for glory, the same apostle remarks, that in them God designs to shew forth the riches of his glory. But has he not, it may be asked, already done this? Did he not shew forth the riches of his glory, when he formed the angels? It should seem from the apostle's remark, that he

did not. This however he means to do, and men are the objects which he has chosen for that purpose. Yes, in adorning, and honoring, and blessing redeemed sinners of the human race, Jehovah means to put forth his strength, to shew what he can do, what glorious beings he can form, when he chooses to display all the riches of his glory. Who then can doubt, that in glory, honor, and felicity, good men will be made, at least, equal to the angels.

There is a dreadful counterpart to this truth, which, though not mentioned in our text, must be briefly noticed. Every argument, which proves that good men are capable of being made equal to the holy angels, may justly be considered as proving, with equal clearness, that wicked men are capable of equalling the fallen angels, who kept not their first estate. The same powers, which, if exerted in one direction, will raise an object high, will, if exerted in an opposite direction, sink it proportionably low. And the terribly expressive language, in which inspiration describes the final doom of the wicked,—the assertion, that they shall share the punishment prepared for the devil and his angels, fully warrants the belief, that, in the future world, sinners, who die impenitent, will, in moral depravity, guilt and wretchedness, sink to a dreadful equality with apostate spirits.

The subject, to which we have led your attention is connected with so many interesting truths, that it is by no means easy to select those, which

are most deserving of particular notice. Indeed, every religious truth, and every thing which is connected with man, assumes, when viewed in the light of this subject, an aspect of overwhelming interest and importance. Can any religious truth be seen, as it is, unless it be viewed in this light? How inestimable, for instance, does the worth of the human soul appear; how clearly is it seen to exceed that of the whole world, when we view it as endued with a capacity of being made equal to the angels! How momentous an event occurs, when such a soul is born into the world! When an immortal being commences a flight through endless duration; a flight, which will raise him high to an equality with angels, or plunge him low among malignant demons and fiends! Think of this, ye parents! ye, to whom is committed the care of giving to this flight its earliest direction, and on whom it much depends, under God, what its termination shall be. How grand, let me farther remark, how Godlike, how every way worthy of himself, does the object of our Saviour's interposition in behalf of ruined man appear, when viewed in the light of this subject! In this light, how clearly is his gospel seen to be glad tidings. What moral glory and sublimity surround his cross, when we contemplate him as voluntarily suspended there, for the purpose of raising such a creature as man, from the depravity, degradation, and wretchedness of apostate spirits, to an equality with the angels in God's presence! And how evident does

it appear, that the reward which raised them to such a height, must be conferred on them, from respect rather to their Saviour's merits, than to their own? We know, that the holy angels have served God with perfect love, and zeal, and fidelity, for at least five thousand years. But all, which the best individual of our race has done, is to serve God, in a very imperfect manner, during part of a comparatively short life. Some, who have already entered heaven, spent a large portion of their lives in sinning against him, became his servants but a short time before death. And can it be made to appear fit, or proper, or even just, that men should receive, in return for such scanty and imperfect services, not only the pardon of their sins, but a reward equal, or superior to that, which will be conferred on the angels? Certainly not, if the rewards, which the righteous will receive, are bestowed from regard to their own merits alone. But when we recollect, what revelation teaches, that the righteous are the members of Jesus Christ, and that, as such, he is made unto them righteousness; that they are appointed to share the rewards which he has merited, all difficulty vanishes. We perceive, at once, that no reward can equal the merits of the Son of God, and that it may be perfectly fit and proper to raise even the most unworthy of his members, for his sake, to an angel's seat in heaven.

But it becomes necessary to waive a further consideration of this, as well as of many other im-

portant topics connected with our subject, and proceed to such an application of it as the occasion demands.

To the pastor elect* this subject, viewed in its connection with the transactions of the day, can scarcely fail to be deeply interesting. The care of your own soul, my dear brother, of working out your own salvation, of preparing yourself for an angel's seat, has hitherto constituted the principal part of your duty. This alone is a work so great, that no man ever yet accomplished it without Almighty aid. But you are now to have a still more difficult task assigned you, to engage in a still greater and more important work. In addition to the care of your own soul, the care of many other souls is to be laid upon you. For each of them our Divine Master has shed blood of inestimable price. Each of them is of more value than the world which it inhabits. Each of them is capable of being made equal to an angel. Whether they shall be raised to this equality, will depend, in a very considerable degree, upon the manner in which you shall perform the work assigned you. If it be true, that the minister, who suitably takes heed to himself, and to his doctrine, shall both save himself, and them that hear him, it must also be true, that he, who neglects this duty, will destroy, not himself only, but his hearers. The thought is appalling, overwhelming. Indeed, the ministerial

* Preached in Bangor at the ordination of Rev. S. L. Pomroy.

office, if seen in all its effects, and consequences, and responsibilities, would crush an angel. But if the work is great, so is the assistance which our Master offers; and so is the reward, which he promises to all who obtain mercy to be faithful. This reward not a few of our race have secured already. From this very spot, where you will take the vows of God upon you, and where you will stand to fulfil those vows, the soul of your predecessor ascended,* as we have reason to hope, to an angel's seat. From this very spot, a band of those celestial beings, who minister to the heirs of salvation, and convey them home to heaven when Jesus commands, exultingly bore away the disembodied spirit to be their companion, and their equal above. From this place then, my brother, look up, and contemplate the throne which he now fills, and the crown which he now wears. Such a throne, such a crown, awaits every faithful servant of Jesus Christ. May you, my dear brother, be enabled to maintain this character, and secure this reward. May you be enabled, as successive years roll away, to take a higher and higher flight toward heaven, and find your beloved people accompanying you in your flight; and may you and they together learn, in the regions above, all that is implied in being made equal to the angels.

This church and religious society, while they accept our cordial and thankful congratulation on

* Rev. Harvey Loomis, to whom reference is here made, died suddenly in his pulpit.

the pleasing prospect before them, and on the healing of that wound which was so suddenly inflicted, and so powerfully felt, will permit us to applaud the concern, which they have manifested, for the resettlement of the gospel ministry among them, and for the zeal and unanimity which have so speedily led to a result so desirable. The concern, which you have felt for the attainment of this object, is, by no means, a causeless or unreasonable concern. If we have souls which render us capable of being made equal to the angels, and if these souls are liable to be lost, the care of them should evidently be the grand business of life; and every thing, which tends to promote their salvation, should be ranked among the most indispensable necessaries of life. That the stated preaching of the gospel does tend to promote their salvation, that, in ordinary cases, they will not be saved without it, will be denied by none, who believe the contents of that volume, which assures us, that faith cometh by hearing. More necessary, then, than food, or raiment, or shelter, is the stated preaching of the gospel of Christ. Allow me, however, to remind you, that the enjoyment of this means of grace, though ordinarily necessary to man's salvation, will by no means secure his salvation. Nay more, if it be not properly improved, it will but accelerate and aggravate his ruin. If it prove not a savor of life unto life, it must prove a savor of death unto death. Those, whom it does not raise to an equality with the angels, it will sink

to an abyss proportionably deep. You stand then, my brethren, midway on an eminence, the summit of which is wrapped in the dazzling glories of heaven, while its base lies deep in the regions of despair, shrouded in the darkness of eternal night. The great object of your minister, the work for which God has sent him among you, is, to persuade you to ascend this eminence. Your own hearts, and numberless temptations, will, on the other hand, endeavor to draw you down, and plunge you in the gulf, which lies at its base. O, then, listen not to these evil counsellors, but listen to your pastor, to your consciences, and to your God. Waiting on him you shall renew your strength, mount up as on eagles' wings, and at length sit down with angels in the kingdom of heaven.

Though fearful of wearying the patience of my auditors, I must beg them to indulge me in addressing, at greater length than is usual on such occasions, an assembly, which I cannot hope ever to address again. To those of them, who are the disciples of Jesus Christ, our subject is full, not only of consolation, but of warning, of reproof, and of the most powerful motives to zeal and diligence, and untiring perseverance in performing the duties, to which their profession calls them. That you may feel the force of these motives, my brethren, consider what is the language of your profession, what you say to the world, when you approach the table of your Lord, or perform any other act which indicates that you consider yourselves as the disci-

ples of Jesus Christ. On every such occasion, you do in effect say, I profess to be one of those, to whom all the promises of the gospel are made; one of those, who are styled children and heirs of God. As one of this number, I expect soon to be called to mingle with the angels, and to be made, in every respect, their equal. When I shall be exalted to this state, is uncertain. It may be to-morrow. It may be the next hour, for there is but a step between me and death, and, consequently, but a step between me and an angel's seat. Such, O professed disciples of Christ, is the lofty, and, as it must appear to the world, assuming language of your profession. And can you utter such language, will shame allow you to utter it, without attempting to live in a corresponding manner! If you do indeed look for such things, what manner of persons ought you to be, in all holy conversation and godliness! How far ought you to live above the world! How dead should you be to all earthly objects and pursuits! What spirituality of temper, what heavenly mindedness, should you feel and exhibit! What can be more obvious, more undeniable, than the conclusion, that, if you hope to be made equal to the angels hereafter, you ought to imitate, so far as is practicable, angels now. That you may be induced to imitate them, and to climb with greater diligence and alacrity the steep ascent before you, let me persuade you to fix your eyes upon its summit. A dense impenetrable cloud appears, indeed, to conceal it from mortal eyes; but

inspiration speaks, and the cloud is dissipated; faith presents her glass, and the sun-bright summit is seen. On him, who sits enthroned upon it, you cannot indeed gaze. His glories, though you shall see them unveiled hereafter, are too insufferably dazzling for mortal eyes to sustain. But contemplate the resplendent forms, which float around him in an atmosphere of pure celestial light. See their bodies, resembling sunbeams seven times refined. See their countenances beaming with intelligence, purity, benevolence and felicity. Through their transparent bodies look in, and contemplate the souls which inhabit them, expanded to the full dimensions of angelic minds, bearing the perfect image of their God, and reflecting his glories, as the polished mirror reflects the glories of the noon-day sun. This, O Christian, is what thou shalt hereafter be. These dazzling forms were once sinful dust and ashes, like thyself. But grace, free, rich, sovereign, almighty grace, has made them what they now are. It has washed and justified, and sanctified, and brought them to glory. And to the same glory, O Christian, it is bringing thee. And canst thou then sleep, canst thou slumber, canst thou be slothful, canst thou complain of the difficulties which attend, of the obstacles which oppose, thy ascent to such glory and felicity as this? O let gratitude, let duty, let shame, if nothing else, forbid. Lift up, ye embryo angels, lift up the heads which hang down, and let the drooping spirit revive. Read, hear, meditate

with prayer, deny yourselves, mortify sin but a little longer, and you shall mount up, not on eagles', but on angels' wings, and know what is meant by being made equal to resplendent intelligences.

To impenitent sinners this subject, taken in connection with other parts of revelation, is a subject of most solemn and awful import. They too possess faculties, which render them capable of being made equal to the angels; but these faculties will only serve, if they remain impenitent and unholy, to sink them down to a dreadful equality with the fallen angels, the spirits of disobedience, for whom the fires of hell are prepared, and to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness and eternal despair. They, indeed, are destined, like the righteous, to immortality; but not, if they remain as they now are, to a happy immortality. No, the language of our Judge is, They that have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life, but they, that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment. My careless, irreligious hearers, think a moment, I beseech you, upon the terribleness of their fate. O, think how terrible it will be, to have the vast capacity of your immortal souls filled, to the very brim, with wretchedness; to see, that, when you might have been raised to an equality with the holy angels, you have sunk yourselves, by your own folly, to a dreadful equality with evil spirits, in character, in malignity, misery, and despair. Yet this must be your fate, unless

you repent, and work the works of God, by believing on him whom he hath sent. God himself has said it, who cannot lie, and who will never change. And are these things so? Is it true, that, before a century shall have passed away, all the souls, who now fill this house, will be angels or demons, and fixed forever in heaven or hell? Yes, my hearers, it is true. It is as certain, as that there is a God; as certain, as that we are here. O, then, in what language can we describe, how can we adequately conceive of, the folly, the madness, of sinners, of those who neglect the great salvation. In less than a century, and, with respect to most of them, in much less than half that time, the question, which of the two opposite states shall be theirs, is to be decided. Yes, my immortal hearers, in a few years will be forever decided the question, whether your vast and almost boundless capacities, shall be filled with happiness, or with misery; whether the noble faculties, which God has given you, shall blossom and expand in heaven, or be scorched and withered in hell; in a word, whether you shall brighten into angels, or blacken into fiends. And while this question is in suspense; a question, which might convulse the thrones of heaven, and throw the universe into agonies of anxiety, how are you, who are most nearly concerned in it, employed? In some childish, worldly scheme of temporal aggrandizement; or in laboring to amass wealth, which you can possess but for an hour, or, perhaps, in a round of frivolous amusements and dissipation. Yes,—

let earth blush, let heaven weep to hear it,—these, these, are the employments, in which immortal beings choose to spend their hours of salvation, to pass away the time, till the great question is decided. Well may inspiration declare, as it does, that the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and that madness is in their hearts while they live. And well may we exclaim, in the language of inspiration, O, that they were wise, that they understood their latter end. My dying, yet immortal hearers! will none of you be wise? Will none of you suffer me, or rather suffer the guiding Spirit of God, to take you by the hand, and lead you to that mount, on the summit of which an angel's crown, and a Saviour's throne, awaits all who overcome the difficulties of the ascent? O, look once more, before you turn away and renounce them forever,—look once more at these inestimable rewards. Look too at Him, who dispenses them. Hear him offering you the aid of his own wisdom to guide you, and of his own power to strengthen you, while contending for the prize. Hear him repeating all the gracious melting invitations, which he addresses to sinners in the volume of his word. Hear him saying, Sinner, trust in me, and I will raise thee to an equality with angels; but neglect me, and thou wilt plunge thyself down to a level with despairing fiends.

SERMON XXV.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED DREADFUL AND INTERMINABLE.

MARK IX. 44.

WHERE THEIR WORM DIETH NOT, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.

A MINISTER, my hearers, who would be faithful, must frequently compare his preaching with the scriptures, and inquire, not only whether he preaches the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, but whether he gives to every particular doctrine and precept just that place in his sermons, which its importance deserves, or which is given to it in the word of God. On instituting such an inquiry, I find, that it is long since I called your attention, particularly, to the punishment, which awaits impenitent sinners in a future state. I have, indeed, frequently alluded to it, and mentioned it incidentally, as was unavoidable; but I have not, I believe, for some years, made it the subject of a discourse. In a word, the doctrine of future punishment has not, of late, filled such a place in my sermons, as it fills in the Bible, as it fills in the discoures of our great Teacher, Jesus Christ. I, therefore, feel bound in duty to call your attention to the subject, painful as it is. Some of you may, perhaps, say, or at least think, that it will do no good. I know not, that it will; for, so far as I can learn, nothing, that I have said of late, has done

any good. Tell me what subject will do you good, and I will preach upon it.

But some will, perhaps, go farther, and say, this doctrine has no tendency to do good; it is altogether idle, to think of frightening men into religion. —With such remarks I have nothing to do. It is my duty, not to decide what doctrines are likely to do good, but to preach such doctrines as I find in the scriptures; not to determine what means will prove effectual, but to use those means which God has appointed. Of these means this doctrine is one; and whether it does good to any of you, or not, I know that it has done good to thousands; that thousands have been moved by fear to fly from the wrath to come. I know also, that, if you believe it, it will do good to you; and no truth can be of service, which is not believed. In fine, I dare not pretend to be either more wise, or more compassionate than our Saviour; and he thought it consistent both with wisdom and with compassion, to utter the words of our text. And he evidently uttered them with a view to alarm his hearers. He addressed himself to their fears, with a view to produce obedience to his commands. The command, which he thus enforced, was this; If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for, he adds, it is better for thee to enter into life with but one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

There can, I think, be no doubt, that, in these

expressions, our Saviour alludes to the manner, in which the Jews disposed of the bodies of the dead. Sometimes, as is the custom with us, they placed them in tombs, where they were, of course, consumed by worms. At others, they prepared a funeral pile, on which the body was placed, in order to be consumed by fire. After the fire had been suffered to rage, till nothing remained but cinders and ashes, they quenched the glowing mass, and carefully deposited it in an urn. If we suppose that our Saviour alluded to these customs, his expressions may be thus paraphrased: You have seen what is done with the body, after death. You have sometimes seen it consumed by worms, which, after they had devoured it, died for want of nourishment. And you have sometimes seen it consumed by a fire, which, after a while, was quenched: But there is another death, which is followed by consequences far more terrible, which affect not the body only, but the soul. Those who die this death, shall be preyed upon by worms, which will never die, and become the fuel of a fire, that will never be quenched. They will be forever dying, forever suffering the pangs of the second death, but will never die, never cease to exist. It will be as if the bodies, which you have seen entombed or burnt, could feel the worms, which devour, or the fires, which consume them. Such must have been the import of these expressions, if our Saviour alluded, as we have every reason to believe he did, to the funeral ceremonies of the Jews. But whether he

did, or did not, allude to them, the import of his language is substantially the same. It is indeed figurative; but not, on that account, less full of meaning, or less terrible. Let us then, with feelings similar to those which prompted him to utter this language, lift the veil of figurative expression, and contemplate the awful truths, which it partly discloses, and partly conceals.

I. In dilating upon these truths, I shall say little of the corporeal sufferings, which await impenitent sinners beyond the grave. Such sufferings will certainly compose a part of their punishment; for we are assured, that their bodies shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation; and our Saviour's language respecting the rich man, who in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torments, more than intimates, that anguish of body was an ingredient in his wretchedness. Indeed, as the body is the servant of the soul, and at once its tempter to many sins, and its instrument in committing them, there seems to be a manifest propriety, in making them companions in punishment. We shall only add, that, as after the resurrection, the bodies of the wicked will be immortal, they will be capable of enduring sufferings, which in this world would cause instant death. But though we know little, because the scriptures say little, of the nature of their bodies, or of the miseries which await them, it is otherwise with respect to the sufferings of the soul. To these sufferings, the declarations of scripture seem principally to refer; and these declara-

tions our knowledge of the soul, and of the causes, which will hereafter operate to render it miserable, enable us, in some measure, to understand. Especially, will it assist us in understanding the first clause in our text—where their worm dieth not. This expression evidently intimates, that the soul will suffer miseries, analogous to those, which would be inflicted on a living body, by a multitude of reptiles constantly preying upon it. And it may be understood to intimate further, that, as a dead body appears to produce the worms which consume it, so the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, really produces the causes of its own misery. What are those causes? or, in the language of our text, what is the gnawing worm, which is to prey upon the soul hereafter? I answer,

1. Its own passions and desires. That these are capable of preying upon the soul, and occasioning, even in this life, most acute suffering, those of you, whose passions are naturally strong, need not be informed. And those of you, whose passions are less violent, whose tempers are comparatively mild, may be convinced of the same truth, by seeing the effects of passion upon others. Look, for instance, at a man who is habitually peevish, fretful, and discontented. Has he not gnawing worms already at his heart? Look at the envious man, whose cheek turns pale, and who feels a secret pang, when he hears a rival commended, or sees him successful. Is there no gnawing worm in his bosom? Look at the covetous man, who

wears himself out in the pursuit of wealth, and who is daily harassed by craving desires, cares and anxieties. Can any worm gnaw worse than these? Look at the votary of ambition, whose success depends on the favor of the great, or of the multitude; who pants to rise, but is kept down by a rival, or by adverse circumstances; and whose mind is full of contrivances, jealousies, and rivalships. Is there no corroding tooth at work in his breast? Look at the proud man, whose blood boils at every real or fancied neglect; at the passionate or revengeful man, who has always some quarrel upon his hands; at the drunkard, whose passions are inflamed by intoxicating potions, and you will find fresh proofs of this truth. It is true, indeed, that none of these passions make men completely wretched in this world, and the reasons why they do not, are obvious. In the first place, there are, in this world, many things, which are calculated to soothe, or, at least, to divert men's passions. Sometimes they meet with success, and this produces, at least, a transient calm. At another time, the objects, which excite their passions, are absent, and this allows them a little quietness. And there are so many things to be attended to, that men have not always leisure to indulge their passions, or attend to the uneasiness which they produce. Above all, they are from their infancy under the operation of causes, which tend to restrain their passions, and weaken, or at least confine, their rage. Besides, every man must sleep, at intervals, and while he

sleeps his passions are at rest. But suppose all these things to be removed, suppose a man to be deprived of sleep, and chained down with nothing to do, but to feel his passions rage continually; suppose him to meet with no success, nothing to soothe his ruffled feelings; suppose the objects, which excite his strongest passions, to be constantly before him; and, finally, suppose all outward and inward restraints to be taken off. Would not such a man be, even in this life, inconceivably wretched? And yet even his wretchedness would be nothing, compared with that, which the sinner's passions and desires will occasion him in a future state. There, his passions, which are now in their infancy, will start up into giant strength; there, all outward and inward restraints will be taken off; there he will have nothing to divert his attention, nothing to assist him in forgetting, even for a moment, his tormenting feelings; there every object, which he ever desired, will be removed from him forever, while the desire will remain in equal, in vastly increased force; there he will be surrounded with malicious, cruel, raging companions, who will continually blow up his passions to the highest pitch of fury. There, not even the respite, which sleep now affords, will be found. Nor is this all. Nothing inflames the passions of men more than suffering. Even men, who are at other times good tempered, often become impatient, discontented, and even angry, when harassed by severe pain, long sickness, or repeated disappointments. How

terribly, then, will the passions of sinners be enraged by the exquisite, hopeless sufferings of a future state! How will they curse themselves, and all around them, and as the scriptures declare, blaspheme God because of their plagues. Against him, and against all good beings, they will feel the most furious, implacable hostility; for they will be entirely under the dominion of that carnal mind, which is enmity against Jehovah.

In addition, the scriptures teach us, that they will see, though afar off, and with an impassable gulf between them, the happiness of the righteous; and this sight will occasion envy, compared with which, all the envious feelings ever entertained on earth are nothing. Every sinner too will find in the regions of despair some, whom his arguments, his solicitations, or at least his example, helped to bring there; and they will overwhelm him, and enrage his passions, with the bitterest reproaches. Nor will sinners there retain the least shadow of those natural affections, or amiable dispositions, which some of them possess here; for our Saviour declares, that from him, that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have. Now consider all these things, and say, who can describe, or conceive of, the misery which sinners will suffer from their own gnawing passions, or of the blasphemies, the execrations, the wild uproar, the raging madness, which will be witnessed, when all the wicked, from all ages and parts of the world,

are imprisoned together in the blackness of darkness, like ravenous lions in their dens. To this God refers, when he says of sinners, They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind; that is, they have indulged sinful passions in this life, and those passions, blown up, as from a wind to a whirlwind, shall be their future companions and tormentors.

2. The gnawing worm, of which our Saviour speaks, includes the consciences of sinners. The sufferings inflicted by conscience will be even more painful, than those which are occasioned by the sinner's passions; for terrible as are the gnawings of passion, those of conscience are still more so. Her scourge draws blood at every stroke. Even in this world she has drawn many, as she did Judas, to despair, madness, and suicide. But her loudest rebukes, her keenest reproaches here, are mere whispers, compared with the thundering voice, in which she will speak hereafter. Here she speaks only at intervals. There she will speak without intermission. Here the sinner has various ways of stifling her reproaches, or diverting his attention from them. He may rush into scenes of business or amusement; he may silence her with sophistical arguments and excuses, or with promises of future amendment; and, when all other means fail, he may drown her for a season in the intoxicating bowl, as too many, alas, madly do. But there, he will have no means of silencing, or escaping from her reproaches, for a moment. Here she knows

comparatively little of God, of duty, or of sin; and therefore, often suffers the sinner to escape, when she ought to scourge him. But there she will see every thing in the clear light of eternity, and in consequence, instead of a whip of small cords, will chastise the sinner as with a scourge of scorpions. There the sinner will clearly see what a God he has offended, what a Saviour he has neglected, what a heaven he has lost, and into what a hell he has plunged himself. All the sins which he has committed, with all their aggravations and consequences; all the sabbaths he enjoyed, the sermons which he heard, the warnings and invitations which he slighted, the opportunities which he misimproved, the serious impressions which he banished, will be set in order before him, and overwhelm him with mountains of conscious guilt. And O, the keen unutterable pangs of remorse, the bitter self reproaches, the unavailing regrets, the fruitless wishes, that he had pursued a different course, which will be thus excited in his breast! The word remorse, is derived from a Latin word, which signifies, *to gnaw again*, or *to gnaw repeatedly*; and surely, no term can more properly describe the sufferings, which are inflicted by an accusing conscience. Well then may such a conscience, when its now sleeping energies shall be wakened by the light of eternity, be compared to a gnawing worm. The heathen made use of a similar figure to describe it. They represented a wicked man as chained to a rock in hell, where an immortal vulture constantly

preyed upon his vitals, which grew again as fast as they were devoured. Nor is this representation at all too strong. Even in this world, where conscience is comparatively weak, I have often seen the bed, and the whole chamber of the sick man, shake under the almost convulsive agonies, which her lash inflicted. I have been told by persons, suffering under most painful diseases, that their bodily sufferings were nothing to the anguish of mind which they endured. I have seen a man of robust constitution, vigorous health, strong mind, and liberal education, tremble, like an aspen leaf, and scarcely able to sustain himself, under the pressure of conscious guilt, and pungent remorse. A man in similar circumstances has been known to rise in winter, at midnight, and run for miles, with naked feet over the rough and frozen ground, in order that the bodily pain, thus occasioned, might, if possible, divert his attention, for a time, from the far more intolerable anguish of his mind. And a dying infidel has been known to exclaim, Surely there is a God, for nothing less than omnipotence could inflict the pangs which I now feel! What then must be the pangs inflicted by a gnawing conscience in eternity?

II. Our Saviour speaks not only of a gnawing worm, but of an unquenchable fire. What reference this may have to the corporeal sufferings of the wicked, I shall not pretend to decide; but it appears evident, from other passages, that, so far as the soul is concerned, it refers to a keen and

constant sense of God's presence and righteous displeasure. He says of himself, I am a consuming fire; and, a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn even to the lowest hell. These expressions evidently intimate, that a view of his perfection, and constant presence, combined with a sense of his displeasure, will affect the soul, as fire does the body, withering its strength, and drying up its spirits. Some of you have formerly known a little of this; and you know, or, at least, will easily conceive, that no fire can torture the body more keenly, than a sense of God's displeasure does the soul. But to those of you, who know nothing of this experimentally, it will be more difficult to convey any clear apprehension of this subject. The following supposition may perhaps assist in doing it. Suppose, that, when Washington was the commander of our armies, you had been a soldier under him, and had been detected in a plot to betray your country. Suppose yourself to be brought before him, surrounded by the whole army, and compelled by some means to fix your eyes steadily, several hours, on his, encountering, during the whole time, his stern, indignant, and withering glances. Would you not soon have found your situation intolerably painful? Would not his glance seem to thrill through your soul, and almost scorch it like fire, or blast it like lightning? What then must it be to see yourselves surrounded by a just and holy God, to meet his heart-searching, heart-withering eye, wherever you turn, fixed full upon

you; to see the Author of your being, the Sovereign of the universe, the great, the glorious, the majestic, the omnipotent, the infinite Jehovah, regarding you with severe displeasure; to see his anger burning against you like fire! O, this will be indeed a fire to the soul! a fire, which will be felt in all its faculties, and fill them to the brim with anguish,—anguish, as much greater than any which could be occasioned by material fire, as the Creator is superior to his creatures. It is then, O, it is a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God, that God, who is a consuming fire to the workers of iniquity!

III. We learn from the passage before us, that these sufferings will be endless. Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And three times successively, our Saviour declares, in the context, that the fire shall never be quenched. In the original language of the New Testament, the language which our Saviour used, there are no expressions which more fully and unequivocally signify eternity, or endless duration, than those which are here employed. In another passage, the very same expressions are applied to the punishment of the wicked, which are used to describe the duration of God's existence. He liveth, we are told, forever and ever; and we are assured, that the wicked shall be tormented forever and ever. If any further proof of this truth is wanting, it may be found in the nature of the punishment itself. We have seen, that the gnawing worm, of which our Saviour

speaks, is the passions and consciences of sinners. Now these belong to the soul; they are as it were a part of it, they are some of its essential faculties. Of course, they must live as long as the soul lives; and as the soul is immortal, they must be immortal. We have also seen, that the fire, which will scorch the souls of the wicked, is a sense of God's presence and anger. Now as he lives forever, and is unchangeably the same, he must forever be displeased with sinners, and be constantly present with them. In other words, the fire of his anger must burn forever. It is a fire, which cannot be quenched, unless God should change or cease to exist. It is this, which constitutes the most terrible ingredient of that cup, which impenitent sinners must drink. Dreadful as will be their sufferings, they would be comparatively light, were there any hope of their termination. But of this there will be no hope. Every thing will conspire to force upon the sinner's mind, a full conviction, that his existence and his sufferings must continue forever; that they will be without mitigation and without end. And this conviction will above all things, wither his courage, and his strength. It will banish all thought of summoning up patience and fortitude to endure his wretchedness, and cause him to sink down under it in the faintness of despair. My hearers, if any of you think I exaggerate, or color too highly, listen to the plain, unadulterated language of God himself. The wicked shall be turned into hell, even all that forget God. They that know not God and

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. In the hand of Jehovah is a cup, and the wine is red, and he poureth out of the same. But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them. They shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and shall be tormented with fire, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever. Will any one, on hearing these passages, reply, My feelings revolt at such statements. I will not, cannot believe them? Then you must reject the Bible; for it is full of such statements, and every fact, every doctrine, confirms them. The incarnation of the Son of God, the tears which he shed for sinners, the blood which he poured out for sinners, the joy which angels feel when one sinner repents, and the unutterable anxiety which inspired men felt for the conversion of sinners,—all conspire to prove, that the fate of those, who die without repentance, without conversion, must be inconceivably dreadful. Will you then say, such a punishment cannot be just? It is impossible that I should deserve it? But remember, that you know nothing of your sins, or of what sin deserves. Were you properly acquainted with your own sinfulness, you would feel convinced, that it is just. All true penitents feel and acknowledge,

that it would have been perfectly just to inflict this punishment upon them. Were not you impenitent, you would feel the same. Besides, this punishment, dreadful as it is, is nothing more than the natural, necessary consequence of persisting in sin. The corroding passions, the remorse of conscience, and the displeasure of God, which will constitute the misery of sinners, are all the result of sin. Every sinner has the seeds of hell already sown in his breast. The sparks, which are to kindle the flames of hell, are already glowing within him. Christ now offers to extinguish these sparks. He shed his blood to quench them. He offers to pour out his Spirit, as water, to quench them. But sinners will not accept his offer. They rather fan the sparks, and add fuel to the fire. How then can they justly complain, when the fire shall break out into an unquenchable conflagration, and burn forever! As well might a man, who should put vipers into his bosom, complain of God, because they stung him. As well might a man, who has kindled a fire and thrown himself into it, complain of God, because the flames scorched him. But I can spend no more time in answering objections, or in defending the justice of God, against the complaints of his creatures. I cannot stand here coolly arguing and reasoning, while I see the pit of destruction, as it were, open before me, and more than half my hearers apparently rushing into it. I feel impelled rather to fly, and throw myself before you in the fatal path, to grasp your hands, to cling to your feet, to

make even convulsive efforts to arrest your progress, and pluck you as brands out of the burning. My careless hearers, my people, my flock! death, perdition, the never dying worm, the unquenchable fire, are before you! Your path leads directly into them. Will you not then hear your friend, your shepherd? Will you not stop, and listen at least for a moment? Will you, O, will you refuse to believe that there is a hell, till you find yourselves in the midst of it? O, be convinced, I conjure you, be convinced by some less fatal proof than this. Yet how can I convince you? How can I stop you? My arm is powerless; yet I cannot let you go. I could shed tears of blood over you, would it avail. Gladly, most gladly, would I die here on the spot, without leaving this sacred desk, could my death be the means of turning you from this fatal course. But what folly is this! to talk of laying down my worthless life to save you. Why, my friends, the Son of God died to save you,—died in agonies,—died on the cross; and surely, that doom cannot but be terrible, to open a way of escape from which he did all this. And it is dreadful. The abyss, into which you are falling, is as deep, as the heaven, from which he descended, is high. And will you then rush into it, while he stands ready to save you? Shall he, as it respects you, die in vain? Will you receive the grace of God in vain? Shall those eyes, which now see the light of the sabbath, glare and wither in eternal burning? Shall those souls, which might be filled with the happiness of

heaven, writhe and agonize forever, under the gnawings of the immortal worm? Shall I, must I hereafter see some who are dear to me, for whom I have labored and prayed and wept, weltering in the billows of despair, and learning, by experience, how far the description comes short of the terrible reality! But I cannot proceed. The thought unmans me. I can only point to the cross of Christ, and say, There is salvation, there is blood, which, if applied, will quench the fires, that are already kindling in your breasts. There is deliverance from the wrath which is to come.

I cannot, must not, however, conclude, without addressing a word, my professing friends, to you. And I hope you will bear with me, if, in view of such a subject as this, I address you with apparent severity. An apostle teaches ministers, that they must sometimes rebuke professing Christians sharply; but I trust my sharpness will be the sharpness of love; and I know that I shall say nothing to you, half so severe as the reproaches, which I have directed against myself, while preparing this discourse. We all deserve perdition, a thousand times, for our stupid insensibility to the situation of those, who are perishing around us. We profess to believe the word of God; but can you all prove that you believe it? Do you all act, as if you believed it? What, believe that many of your acquaintances, your children, are in danger of the fate, which has now been described! Dare you go to God, and say, Lord, I believe thy word, I believe that all thy

threatenings will be fulfilled, and then turn away, and coolly pursue your worldly business, without uttering one agonizing cry for those, who are exposed to these threatenings? Dare you go and claim relationship to Christ, and profess to have his Spirit, without which you are none of his, and then make no effort, or only a few faint efforts, to save those, for whom he shed not tears only, but blood? O, if you can do this, where are the bowels, I will not say of a Christian, but of a man? Go, I may say to such, go, inconsistent, cruel, hard-hearted professors; go, slumber over the ruin of immortal souls; wrap yourself up in your selfish temporal interests, and say, I have no time to spare for rescuing others from everlasting burnings. Go, wear out your life in acquiring property for your children, and leave their souls to perish in the fire that never shall be quenched. Go, adorn their bodies, and banish from them, if possible, the seeds of disease; but leave in their bosoms that immortal worm, which will gnaw them forever. And when God asks, where is thy child? thy brother? thy friend? reply, with impious Cain, I know not, I care not; am I his keeper?

But I cannot proceed farther in this strain. I would rather beseech, and melt, and win you by tenderness. Say, then, Christian, dost thou believe that Christ died to save thee from the misery, which has been imperfectly described? Dost thou believe, that, if he had not loved thee, and given himself for thee, the gnawing worm and the un-

quenchable fire would have been thy portion forever? O then, where is thy gratitude, thy love? Where are the returns, which he has a right to expect? Hast thou already made him a sufficient return for such inestimable benefits? Has he not reason to say, at least to some of you, Did I die for thee; redeem thee from sin, and death, and hell, that thou mightest crucify me afresh, by thy unkindness and unbelief? Did I watch and pray, whole nights, that thou mightest neglect watchfulness and prayer? Did I purchase for thee divine grace, precious promises, and strong consolation, that thou mightest make light of them, or turn them into wantonness? And do I prolong thy forfeited life, that thou mayest live carelessly, unprofitably, or like the world around thee? No, I redeemed thee, that thou mightest be mine, wholly mine. I purchased for thee grace, that thou mightest grow. And I preserve thy life, that thou mayest live, not to thyself, but to him who died for thee. I have revealed the knowledge of thy Maker, and taught thee the way of redemption, that thou mightest adorn the doctrine of God thy Saviour in all things. And wilt thou frustrate these purposes by thy sloth and negligence? Thou wilt do it, then, to thine own eternal injury; for the fearful and the unbelieving shall have their part, with the abominable, in the lake, which burneth with fire, that never shall be quenched.

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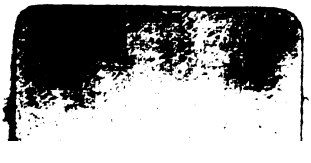
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